

JUDAISM

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"PIETY" AND HONESTY

Louis Isaac Rabinowitz

THE ISLAMIC CONNECTION

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SONS AGAINST THEIR FATHERS

Michael D. Oppenheim

TALMUDIC MEDICINE

Stephen Newmyer

ISSUE No. 115 / VOLUME 29 / NUMBER 3 / \$2.75 **SUMMER 1980**

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS

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The American Jewish Congress is sponsoring the publication of JUDAISM: A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF JEWISH LIFE AND THOUGHT as part of their basic policy to stimulate an informed awareness of Jewish affairs, encourage Jewish scholarship and adequate opportunities for Jewish education, and generally foster the affirmation of Jewish religious, cultural, and historic identity.

JUDAISM, conceived as a free and non-partisan organ, is dedicated to the creative discussion and exposition of the religious, moral and philosophical concepts of Judaism and their relevance to the problems of modern society. Through an exploration of the meaning and needs of the Jewish experience, it hopes to widen the channels of communication between Jews and to affirm Jewish verity and vitality to the world at large.

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JUDAISM: A QUARTERLY JOURNAL is published by the American Jewish Congress. It appears in January, April, July and October. Office of Publication: 15 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. 10028. Re-entered as second-class matter at Post Office, New York City, N.Y. Subscription in the United States and Canada, \$10.00 for one year, \$18.00 for two years, \$25.00 for three years; foreign subscription, \$11.00 for one year, \$20.00 for two years, \$28.00 for three years. Special rate for bulk (10 or more) and student subscriptions, \$6.00. Single issue, \$2.75; single issue abroad, \$3.00. Make checks payable to the order of JUDAISM, and send to 15 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. 10028. Allow six weeks for notice of change of address.

US ISSN 0022-5762

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a worldview on the issues that are timeless—the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

Judaism will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God." From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.

The First Reader

The Relevance of Honesty is Disappearing

A perennial source of bafflement and concern is to be found in the frequent instances where ritual piety of the most extreme sort goes hand in hand with a total indifference to ethical values. Examples may be found of dishonesty in transactions between individuals, lack of integrity in major business enterprises, or violation of the laws and regulations of the government.

In "‘Piety’ and Honesty," *Louis Isaac Rabinowitz*, writing from an Orthodox perspective and on the basis of day-to-day living in Israel, points up the gravity of the problem. This issue must be confronted squarely if the Jewish religion is to continue in any meaningful sense and is to prove worthy of survival.

Isaac and Ishmael Are Related

The relationship of Jews and Arabs can be documented from the days of Ezra and Nehemiah in the sixth century B.C.E. It reached its apogee in "the Golden Age of Spain," when Jewish culture attained to a richness and creativity unequalled elsewhere, under the stimulus of Islamic culture and the favorable conditions of Moslem rule.

In our century, the shifting tides of the Jewish-Arab confrontation have led scholars to evaluate their mutual relationship in varying forms, often accentuating the negative and minimizing the positive features of their interaction.

In her paper, "The Islamic Connection," *Trude Weiss-Rosmarin* presents a detailed survey of the elements linking Judaism and Islam and implying the possibility of renewing a mutually beneficial relationship between the two people descended from Abraham.

A Different View of Zionism and Judaism

The Zionist vision of a Jewish people living free and independent upon its own soil, and the reality of the State of Israel building, creating and defending its existence in a hostile world, have become central to the thought and value-system of the overwhelming majority of Jews living in the world today. They may differ on religious, political, social and economic issues, and disagree about the course to be pursued by the State

of Israel in its struggle for survival, but the conviction that Israel is indispensable and its survival a necessity is universally agreed upon.

Well, not quite. In a paper entitled "Zionism and Judaism," *Yehudi Adam* (obviously a pseudonym) cuts a wide swath in attacking Zionism, modernism, the concept of Judaism as a religion, and contemporary forms of Jewish identification and loyalty. All are described as distortions of the "true Judaism" of the past. In fact, the author suggests, no recovery of this "true Judaism" is really possible. Obviously, the author is too emotionally involved to be concerned with the careful analysis of the terms and concepts that he seeks to demolish. His own definition of Judaism as a spirit "springing from a vision of a world that is free from man-made evils," is an extreme formulation of one of the traditional concepts of the Messianic Age.

Nevertheless, this swinging attack upon virtually all aspects of the contemporary Jewish worldview may stimulate our readers to reconsider the bases of their own outlook on Judaism and the Jewish people.

Two Giants: Aḥad Ha-Am and Zunz

The nineteenth century, which saw the emergence of various modern interpretations of the Jewish religion, conveniently, if not accurately, described as Orthodox, Conservative and Reform, was also marked by the emergence of varied significant efforts to reinterpret the Jewish heritage in cultural terms and to highlight its significance. One such effort was the rise of the school of *Jüdische Wissenschaft*, or modern Jewish scholarship. At its inception, it was virtually the single-handed creation of one man, Leopold Zunz, of whom Heine said that he, alone, of all his contemporaries, "remained loyal to the great caprice of his soul." At the end of his long life, Jewish scholarship was a recognized member of humanistic studies throughout the world. By its very nature, however, it was directed primarily to the past and many of its practitioners, including Zunz himself, had little hope for the Jewish future.

Another cultural movement was the rebirth of modern Hebrew and the creation of a rich literature with Hebrew as its medium of expression. The Hebrew thinker, Aḥad Ha-Am, stressed the centrality of Jewish culture and felt that it could serve as the unifying factor for the Jewish people the world over and as the vivifying element for the new Jewish settlements in Palestine. Aḥad Ha-Am was an avid student of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* to which he was indebted in many respects. Nevertheless, he was critical of its essentially pessimistic forecast for Judaism and its alienation from the masses of the Jewish people. He had other criticisms to level against modern Jewish scholarship as well.

The points of contact and difference between these two giants of the Jewish spirit are examined by *Alfred Gottschalk* in "Aḥad Ha-Am and Leopold Zunz: Two Perspectives on the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*."

Prayer Must Always Come From the Heart

There are many and complex ways in which folk-tradition impinges on the life and activity of the creative artist. A striking case in point is afforded in the paper, "The Simpleton's Prayer," by *Marc Saperstein*. A familiar motif from traditional religious sources emphasizes the significance of sincerity in prayer as against the meticulous adherence to the prescriptions of the Law. The theme continues to find expression in Jewish folklore, each time with a greater measure of elaboration. It finally achieves a literary form in the writings of the Hebrew novelist, I.D. Berkowitz. The paper traces the growth of the theme, noting the points of similarity and difference in the various versions, traditional and modern.

Yiddish is Alive and Well

There is no dearth of observers of the American Jewish community, both pessimistic and optimistic. Inventory is constantly being taken both by realists and by utopians of the factors making for Jewish survival and the forces working against it. One of the most important losses in the arsenal of meaningful Jewish life is all too often overlooked — the rapid and apparently irreversible decline in the number of Yiddish speakers and readers.

In his paper, "The Yiddish Word Persists," *Meyer Bass* examines both the quality and the quantity of the "Yiddish word" in our day. He calls attention to the heightened recognition that Yiddish achieved by the award of the Nobel Prize to I.B. Singer and the increasing penetration of Yiddish words, idioms and thought-patterns into the life of American Jews, even those who do not speak Yiddish themselves. While the quantitative decline of Yiddish seems a foregone conclusion, at least in the United States, it has experienced a rebirth in other centers of Jewish population, like Latin America and, rather astonishingly, in the State of Israel.

Even in the United States, interest in Yiddish both on the academic and the general cultural levels is growing for a minority of motivated and knowledgeable Jews.

Creativity in Hebrew

The cultivation of Hebrew in this country is as old as the first American universities, Harvard and Yale. It was, however, primarily Biblical Hebrew and the Scriptures enshrined in that language which were of concern to the Puritans and their early successors in the United States.

With the great influx of East European Jews after 1880, a school of modern Hebrew writers arose in America, writing poetry, criticism and

fiction of a high order. In her paper, "Hebrew Literature in America," *Tina Levitan* surveys this school of writers, many of whom have already passed away. Fortunately, several gifted poets and prose writers still practice their craft in this country.

Hebrew literature in America was not merely a matter of language. These writers reflected the American scene, drew upon the American past, and pictured the American present. They added a significant dimension to the richness of modern and contemporary Hebrew literature.

The Bible Can Be Endlessly Reinterpreted

The inexhaustible riches of the Bible, layer upon layer, continue to be a source of astonishment to the sensitive reader and a spur to research for the creative scholar. The famous incident of Esau's selling his birthright to Jacob is the theme of a paper by *Reuben Ahroni*. In "Why Did Esau Spurn the Birthright?" he reveals that there are larger horizons to the incident than might appear to the casual reader and offers a persuasive interpretation, deriving from the great medieval Jewish commentator, Abraham Ibn Ezra.

Buber's Influence on Students

During the sixties and early seventies, the Jewish student counter-culture was an exciting and challenging phenomenon on the American Jewish scene. It questioned the so-called Jewish Establishment and its system of priorities. It created its own institutional form in the *havurah*, which, to be sure, has undergone changes since its inception, but continues to be a vital factor in many Jewish communities. It saved for Jewish life many creative spirits whose contributions to Jewish life have been, and will undoubtedly continue to be, significant.

In their paper, "Martin Buber and the American Jewish Counterculture," *Yizhak Ahren* and *Jack Nusan Porter* trace the varied influences emanating from Martin Buber which affected the predominantly left-wing Jewish student movement during the last two decades.

The Tension Between the Generations

The conflict between the generations, popular though it be as a theme for discussion, is no new phenomenon. The Prophet Micah, in the eighth century B.C.E., described it vividly in these words: "for the son despises his father, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men

of his own house." The complaint that the young are disrespectful of their elders and the charge that the old do not understand the young may be documented for every period in human history. Nonetheless, the era of dizzying change in which we live has intensified the conflict between the generations.

In his paper, "Sons Against Their Fathers," *Michael D. Oppenheim* suggests that the tension between the generations played a significant role in stimulating the creative activity of such diverse figures as Freud, Kafka, Buber, Rosenzweig and Gershom Scholem.

How Old is Old?

Readers of the Book of Genesis cannot fail to be struck by the high figures given for the life-spans of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. Various explanations of the longevity of the Patriarchs have been suggested. Believers in the literal inerrancy of Scripture have had no difficulty in accepting these figures. Others, however, have treated the figures as exaggerations or the result of errors in transmission of the text. Modern scholars, in general, have sought to explain these high numbers as reflecting the view of the ancients that the Golden Age of mankind lay in the past, when people were more vigorous and lived longer, and that thereafter a decline in strength and longevity set in. As a result, the Patriarchs before Noah's flood lived longer than did the Hebrew Patriarchs, who, in turn, had a longer life span than their later descendants.

A new hypothesis for dealing with these figures is proposed by *Michael Rosenzweig*. In his paper, "Life History Data in the Bible, from Abraham to Joshua," he makes the suggestion that the Hebrew word *shanah*, "year," in these passages really means "half year." He maintains that when the dates given in Genesis are cut in half, they conform to normal human experience as we know it today.

My Son, the Doctor

The present-day pre-eminence of Jews in medical research and practice has respectable antecedents in the Middle Ages. There is documentary evidence of Jewish interest in the healing art going back to the Bible and the Talmud. Nevertheless, in the ancient world, it was the Greeks and their successors who were outstanding in this field.

Stephen Newmyer, in his paper, "Talmudic Medicine: A Classicist's Perspective," offers a comparison between Talmudic medicine and its counterpart in the Greco-Roman world. He suggests that the sense of the reverence for life was far more deeply rooted in the Jewish tradition than in its non-Jewish counterpart.

One Humanitarian Attempt to Save the Jews

"New troubles cause us to forget the old," the Rabbis of old declared. The unbroken series of catastrophes that have befallen the Jewish people in the twentieth century have pushed into the background many other events that loomed large on the horizon in their day. Such was the Evian Conference, called by Franklin Roosevelt in 1938, to find places of refuge for the growing number of "displaced persons" in Europe. As we now know, this was Roosevelt's token obeisance to humanitarianism in the face of Hitler's policy of the total extermination of the Jews, of which the Allied Powers were aware and which they confronted in silence and inaction.

The Evian Conference proved a failure. Interpreted as a Hebrew word, Evian means "poor, destitute." Read backwards, it spells "naive." The one positive result was the offer by the Dominican dictator, Rafael Trujillo, to admit up to 100,000 Jewish refugees into the Dominican Republic. The background of the incident, the motivations behind the offer, the establishment of Sosua as the Jewish settlement center, and the end of the project are the subjects of *Hyman J. Kisch's* paper, "Rafael Trujillo — 'Caribbean Cyrus,'" an excursus into an almost forgotten chapter of recent Jewish history.

R. G.

“Piety” and Honesty

LOUIS ISAAC RABINOWITZ

IN JULY, 1979, A SENSATIONAL CASE OF GOLD smuggling into Israel was exposed by the police. The arch-smuggler was a veteran pilot of El Al with a distinguished flying record to his credit. It was he who brought the last consignment of gold bricks, in the possession of which he was apprehended, to the apartment of his mistress where the police lay in ambush, waiting for other participants in the alleged crime to assemble. They swooped down on the apartment, and among those who were caught in the net were two young men, members of the fanatically orthodox Jewish sect which inhabits the Meah Shearim Quarter of Jerusalem. When surprised, the men attempted to make their escape by fleeing in a car, but they were hotly pursued by the police, who had to fire at the tires in order to bring the car to a halt and to arrest them. This bizarre detail of what has been a massive, well-organized criminal activity which has been going on for years, and whose ramifications have not yet been fully revealed, was, of course, prominently featured in the local press, and it resulted in the following letter which appeared in the English language Jerusalem Post of July 25:

Sir,

When you reported on the diamond (sic) smuggling incident (July 17th), it was wrong of you to single out two of the suspects by describing them as “men from Jerusalem’s ultra-orthodox Meah Shearim.” You did not describe the other suspects as being non-religious, and from non-religious neighborhoods, if this is so. If these two Meah Shearim people are guilty, their guilt has nothing to do with their supposed piety. Every group, sect, and profession, whether religious, political, humanitarian, or philanthropic, is composed of human beings, and among human beings one finds honest and dishonest people. Just as we do not refer to suspected criminals by color, so we should not designate them as religious or non-religious.

Apparently the writer of this letter is of the opinion that the question of a person’s religious adherence is as irrelevant in matters of crime as is that of his color!

Let me say that insofar as the word “piety,” as used by the writer of this letter, refers to their rigid adherence to every one of the minutiae of ritual observance of Judaism, including the utter unthinkability of their walking four cubits while bareheaded (I mention this for a reason which will become clear in the course of this article) or reciting their prayers thrice daily, or adhering to the most rigid standards of the dietary laws

LOUIS ISAAC RABINOWITZ, *a former Chief Rabbi of South Africa (1945-1962) is now rabbi of the Achdut Israel Synagogue in Jerusalem and active in civic affairs.*

(*glatt kasher* or *le-mehadrim*), displaying their fringes outside, etc., etc.; I can state unhesitatingly, from a personal knowledge of one of them, that that "piety" is not "supposed" but very real.

It is that fact which brings into agonisingly sharp focus the painful subject of this article; the fact that in those — and in other — extreme orthodox circles there exists a complete divorce between the exercise of "piety" and exalted standards of ethical behavior in commercial transactions or in obedience to the secular laws of the State. I would like to make it quite clear from the onset that under no circumstances would I be so foolish, or unfair, as to suggest that these circles constitute a group of criminals and wrongdoers. I would unhesitatingly go so far as to maintain that the percentage of wrongdoers among them is considerably less than among the secular section of the population. It is equally beyond doubt or question that their standards of sexual morality are of the highest and that they maintain the most admirable standards in this respect. But what I do emphasize is that whatever standards of ethical and civic virtue they display are activated not by their religious principles, but by factors unconnected with them. There is perhaps something symbolic in the fact that, when a photographer tried to take their picture, they covered their faces with a plastic bag containing a prayer book and other religious literature! And when the police applied for them to be retained in custody until the trial, their defending counsel opposed the application on the grounds that the food in prison was only "normally *kasher*" while they could eat only the more rigid standard of *kasher* food which is called *glatt kasher*!

This anomaly is all the more strange and perplexing when viewed from the point of view of Jewish religious law and its codification in the *Shulhan Arukh* which is, with this exception, the sanctum sanctorum of these super-orthodox Jews. Let me explain.

Joseph Karo's classical code, unlike the monumental *Mishneh Torah* of Maimonides, confines itself solely to those laws which were of practical application in his time, and which is still the case, with the only possible exception of the application of these aspects of the halakhah which have become operative with the establishment of the State. As a result, where Maimonides, who deals with inoperative as well as with operative laws (e.g., the sacrificial system, laws appertaining to the Temple, to Jewish government, etc.), found it necessary to divide his work into fourteen books, Karo was able to limit himself to four. They are *Orah Hayyim*, which codifies the laws of the Jewish year, daily prayer, Sabbaths, Festivals, fasts, etc.; *Yoreh Deah*, which deals generally with the dietary laws in all their aspects; *Even Ha-Ezer*, which deals with personal status, marriage, divorce, etc., and, lastly, *Hoshen Mishpat* which is, so to speak, civil law, the laws of *meum* and *teum*, business evidence, judges, theft, robbery, etc.

The laws appertaining to all of these sections, based mainly upon the Talmud and the earlier authorities, are equally binding upon all orthodox

Jews. The fact is, however, that whereas these Jews adhere to the details of the first three sections to the last jot and tittle, and would be the first to maintain that anyone who deviates from them thereby puts himself outside the pale of normative Judaism and is an *apikoros*, a heretic, with regard to the fourth, *Hoshen Mishpat*, an entirely different attitude obtains. To give but one apposite instance, the transgression with which these gold smugglers are charged is expressed in almost identical terms, and with pellucid clarity by both the *Hoshen Mishpat* (Chapter 469.6-7 and Maimonides, "Laws of Robbery" 5.11-14, as follows:

If the king (or the government, and the reference is to a non-Jewish government) fixes a tax of, say, a third or a quarter, or any fixed sum, and appoints as its collector a Jew known to be a trustworthy person, who would not add to the amount of the imposed . . . the decree has the force of (religious) law. Moreover, if one avoids paying such a tax he is a transgressor, for he steals the king's property, whether the king be a non-Jew or a Jew.

This rule applies in cases where a king imposes a tax on the citizens or on each person individually, a fixed annual amount, or imposes a fixed amount on each field; if one breaks that law he shall forfeit his property . . . The general rule is: any law promulgated which applies equally to everyone and not to one person alone is legal.

(Maimonides)

In theory, this law, as, indeed, all laws in the *Shulhan Arukh*, section *Hoshen Mishpat*, are as binding upon Jews from Meah Shearim as are the dietary laws, the laws of daily prayer, of phylacteries and ritual fringes, of marriage and legitimacy. The fact is, however, that to those people these laws belong to a sphere other than religious law, and can be ignored or broken without calling into question their status as observant Jews.

Let me relate two incidents to illustrate how this dichotomy operates in practice, on the basis of my personal experience.

The first is not without its amusing side, but it is certainly instructive. I decided to return from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem by the one daily train. It was a particularly hot day and I removed the beret which I was wearing and donned my *kippah* (skull cap). On arrival at my destination I resumed the beret and proceeded on foot the short distance from the station to my home. I had gone about one hundred yards when someone tapped me on the shoulder. It was a yeshivah student who had been sitting near me on the train. "Sir," he said pleasantly, "you have forgotten to remove your *kippah*." I had, in fact, thoughtlessly forgotten to remove it. I thanked him and in taking off my beret the *kippah* fell to the ground. I stooped to pick it up and proceeded to readjust my headgear while walking. Suddenly he grasped me firmly by the arm and said, "STOP!" "What is the matter?" I asked, and he replied, "You have already walked four cubits bareheaded, and it is forbidden!" "Are you sure about the exact length of the cubit?" I asked jokingly. "No," he replied, "but it is always better to take the more extreme view and thus be free of all doubt." I bantered with him until our ways parted.

In order to appreciate the second part of this incident, I must point out that since I was elected a member of the Jerusalem Municipal Council and, especially, since my appointment as Deputy Mayor, I have been waging what is almost a one-man war against the widespread disregard of the notice in busses on urban lines that smoking is prohibited. Only three hours after this incident I mounted a bus and, at the next stop, this selfsame *yeshivah boħur* entered with a cigarette between his lips. As he passed down the aisle and came level with me I said to him, "Excuse me, but haven't you seen the notice that smoking is prohibited?" His answer was in quite a different tone than in the earlier encounter when he was the "accuser" and I the "defendant." He answered aggressively, "Does it worry you? Is it your business?" and when I replied, "It doesn't worry me, but it happens to be forbidden and I demand that you desist," he replied by puffing at the cigarette and blowing the smoke in my face! To cut a long story short, I forced him to extinguish the cigarette, and then I said to him, "Now I want to talk to you. Less than three hours ago you tried to prevent me from committing the transgression of walking bareheaded. Don't you agree that flouting the government regulations is also a transgression?" He was quite unimpressed, and kept silence, whereupon I continued, "You are obviously a yeshivah student. Surely you have learnt the law that *dina de-malkhuta dina*, that the civil law of the country is binding upon the Jew. I know that the statement refers to a non-Jewish government, but whatever you may think of the government of this country it is surely not worse than that of a non-Jewish government."

He looked at me in utter amazement and said, "To someone with such strange ideas I have nothing to say," and got up and moved to another seat! (I had taken a seat next to him to put this point to him.)

If the truth be told, I fully understood his amazement. I was wrong in adducing this *kal ve-homer*, this "argument from minor to major," and it is this element which introduces a new dimension into the attitude of the extreme circles in Israel. It simply does not hold water with them. Whether because of the law of *dina de-malkhuta dina*, whether because of fear of the consequences, or whether even because in a non-Jewish country the element of *hillul ha-Shem* does influence them, these elements are much more prone to accept the civil law of a non-Jewish country than that of the State of Israel. They regard the State and all its works, the government and its legislation, as an instrument of the devil. The extreme right religious party, the Agudat Israel, which, for instance, rejects the religious educational system sponsored by the government and denies the authority of the Chief Rabbis, is anathema to them because it is represented in the Knesset and, since 1977, even is part of the ruling government coalition. That obedience to their laws should be binding upon them constitutes one of these "strange ideas" which that young man attributed to me.

The other incident belongs in a different category. Also during my

period of office as Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem, I was one of a delegation which called upon the recently elected Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, Rabbi B. Zolty, to congratulate him on his appointment and to convey our best wishes for the New Year.

The Chief Rabbi, in the course of his remarks, proudly stated that he was not confining his activities to the purely ritual side of the activities connected with his office, such as *kashrut* and Sabbath observance, but was also concerning himself with ethical questions, and in evidence produced the draft of a notice which he intended having displayed on the public bill boards. The quest for a perfect, unblemished *etrog* for use on the festival of *Sukkot* is almost a passion with observant Jews, especially in Jerusalem, and in that year (5738-1977) the price demanded for one had soared to record levels of exorbitance. The placard was an appeal to the *etrog* merchants to limit their rapacity and not to profiteer overmuch. I presumed to ask him a question: "Chief Rabbi, that is most creditable, but would you also consider asking them to meet you and make a personal appeal to them in this matter?" To which he replied, "But, Rabbi Rabinowitz, they are all observant Jews, and it is quite unnecessary." The underlying idea that they were of such "piety" that a notice on the public billboards would suffice for them to heed its appeal simply boggles the imagination, and, needless to say, the exorbitant prices were still demanded.

In 1978, a similar poster was displayed, couched in even more emphatic terms, but the prices demanded in the year that had passed were modest compared to those of the current year. And let it be added to the credit of Rabbi Zolty, in view of the serious criticism which follows, that he actually went so far as to announce that if a Jew of limited means were to be faced with the choice of providing his children with new clothes for the festival, or expending the money on acquiring the Four Species, he should choose the former, and make use of the *etrog* provided by the congregation for the use of those who did not possess their own. Thus, the Chief Rabbi emerges as one who is alive to the ethical as contrasted with the mere ritual, aspect, but this serves only to underscore the mentality which is revealed by the following incident.

One of the most striking examples of the almost complete divorce between observance and ethical standards found its expression recently in the deplorable incident of stone-throwing, on the Sabbath, by extreme orthodox elements at vehicles which passed by (but not through) their orthodox suburb. They were reinforced by hundreds of members of the *Neturei Karta* who made their way from Meah Shearim, dressed in their traditional garb of *shtreimel* and *kapote*, bearded and in *peot*, with their ritual fringes hanging out. Windscreens were smashed, some people suffered injuries, and there were scuffles with the police. Now, according to the halakhah it is forbidden even to lift a stone on the Sabbath, much

less to cast it. How, then, could this action be justified by those to whom every jot and tittle of the halakhah is sacrosanct?

The spokesman of the Neturei Karta, incidentally an American, Rabbi Hirsch, did so in a radio interview with the following parallel: "We are following the example of Pinchas the zealot. In his zeal he slew Zimri ben Salu and his Midianite paramour, and although this was forbidden by the halakhah, he was given the blessing of the 'covenant of peace' and the priesthood was made permanent in his family as a reward for his action" (Numbers 15: 1-15). Now, whatever one may think of the analogy, at least there was an attempt to justify it halakhically.

Not so Rabbi Zolty. In an interview which he granted to the correspondent of a paper devoted to Jerusalem, entitled *Kol Ha-Ir*, which appeared on September 21, 1979, he was asked his views about this stone throwing. I give a verbatim translation of the relevant passages:

Rabbi Zolty: In my opinion no observant Jew would ever throw a stone on the Sabbath.

Question: Does the rabbi imply that the culprits (are non-religious Jews who) disguise themselves?

Rabbi Zolty: Absolutely (*be-hehlet ken*). It is provocation on the part of individuals who disguise themselves as observant Jews. For it is forbidden to handle a stone on the Sabbath!

And yet, later on in the same interview, completely overlooking this amazing allegation, when asked why he had not raised his voice against these acts of violence, he replied as follows:

Were the desecrators of the Sabbath to pay heed to me, I would also express my disapproval of those among the orthodox who perform undesirable acts. The Talmud states, "As one is obliged to speak out when one's words will be heeded, so one should refrain from expressing oneself when his words will fall on deaf ears. And we have reached a stage when Jews are sacrificing themselves (sic!) on the altar of Sabbath observance. Will they pay heed to the voice of the rabbinate? Moreover, were one to make his voice heard on this, it would be tantamount to condemning a whole section of the community. And the rabbinate has no indisputable evidence of who is indeed to blame, or what actually happened on the road to Ramot.

Needless to say, the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem was perfectly aware that there was not a shadow of substance in his amazing allegation of secular Jews disguising themselves in beards, *peot*, *shtreimel* and *kapote*, just as he was perfectly aware, as he partly admitted in the second passage, who the perpetrators were; but standards of truth and ethical integrity went by the board in favor of a clever "let out" and, no doubt, he was acclaimed by his followers for his *pilpulistic* ingenuity. It is a disturbing revelation of a mentality and who can blame those who, in their own dealings, differentiate between ethics and ritual?

The sad fact is that whatever belongs to the sphere of civil law, to right conduct in commercial matters, is "foreign" to them in every sense of the word.

But it is not only they who are guilty; it is all of us. It is not only they who regard deviation from accepted and legal standards in these matters as impugning their religious standards. We also regard them as strictly observant, as *froome yidden* as long as they adhere to the ritual requirements of the other three sections of the *Shulhan Arukh*. That this dichotomy casts a grave reflection upon orthodox Judaism and its adherents is almost completely ignored, and I cannot do better than conclude with a moving passage from the Talmud (*Yoma* 86b):

A person who studies Torah and attends on the sages, and is honest in business, and speaks pleasantly to people, what do people say of him? "Happy the father who taught him Torah; alas for those who have not studied Torah. See how fine are his ways and how righteous his conduct. Of him Scripture says, 'And he said unto me, Thou art My servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified' (Isaiah 49.3)." But if someone studies Torah and Mishnah, attends upon the sages, but is dishonest in business and discourteous in his relations with people, what do they say of him? "Woe unto him who has studied the Torah; woe unto the father who taught him Torah, woe unto the teacher who taught him Torah. Look how corrupt are his actions, how ugly his ways. Of him Scripture declares 'They profaned My holy Name, in that men said of them, These are the people of the Lord' (Ezekiel 36.20)."

The Islamic Connection

TRUDE WEISS-ROSMARIN

And Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people. Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah in the field of Ephron. . . .

Genesis 25:9.

When he was near death, Jacob said to his sons: "Whom will you worship after I am gone?" They said: "We shall worship your God, the God of your fathers, Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac, the Only God."

Quran Sura 2:133

AS SACRED SCRIPTURES, THE HEBREW BIBLE and the Quran preserve the type of mythological "truths" which are conducive to shaping history. The Gospels did so when they proclaimed Jesus as "the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matthew: 1:1). Five centuries later, the founder of Islam authenticated his new religion in the same manner. He declared that Islam is "the religion of Abraham" (Sura 2:130) because the Arabs can claim descent from Ishmael, Abraham's first-born by Hagar.

Unlike Paul, the architect of Christianity who denationalized the Jewish legacy so as to enhance the universal character of Christianity, Muhammad structured (and this structure has not changed) Islam as the national religion of the Arabs with Arabic as "the holy language." Even more than Judaism guards Hebrew, Islam stands guards over Arabic as the bond of Arab unity and the basis of the shared culture of Muslims of many nationalities. Owing to this emphasis on the language as one of the sancta of Islam, the Quran must not be translated (by Muslims) and Islamic religious services must be conducted in Arabic. Such reforms as prayer in the vernacular, now accepted even by Orthodox synagogues, and the translation of the Latin Mass are rejected by Muslim leaders as models for Islam.

Although Biblical and Quranic genealogies are open to doubt, there are close links between Arabs and Jews, a type of connection which existed long before the rise of Islam. It is not an affinity of "race" because, as S.D.

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Goitein notes, "the pseudo-scientific myth of the Semitic race . . . has no basis in historical reality;"¹ rather, it is the affinity of Arabic and Hebrew, as Semitic languages, and certain shared sociological traits which Goitein types as "those of a *primitive democracy*" (Goitein's italics). In his opinion,

Israel and the Arabs alone preserved their primitive democracy, and the moral attitude implied by it, at the decisive hour in their history when both peoples became the bearers of religions which were destined to mold the development of a great part of the human race.²

Thanks to these pre-Islamic affinities, Muhammad was attuned and receptive to the Jewish legacy with which he became acquainted after his flight from Mecca to Medina with its large Jewish population. Unlike Christianity, however, Judaism's elder daughter, Islam, does not profess beliefs which go counter to basic Jewish beliefs. Neither does it claim to having supplanted Judaism. Islam has never represented itself as "The True Israel of God."

Islam is as consistently monotheistic as is Judaism. It professes the *unique* oneness of God and denies the possibility that a mortal, no matter how perfect, can share godhood. Analogous to Moses and his place in Judaism, Muhammad is revered as the mortal founder-and-prophet of Islam.

As a consequence of its affirmation of the incorporeality of God and the prohibition of picturing him in physical form, Islam outlaws figurative art even more strictly than does Judaism. In consonance with the second commandment, mosques are devoid of figurative art. Muslim art is arabesque ornamentation.

Like Judaism, Islam is a religion of Law — *sharia* (way). What *halakhah* (way) is for Judaism, *sharia* is for Islam. It legislates for all life situations, also for "what enters the mouth," which is of no concern to Christianity. The Islamic dietary laws, which prohibit the eating of pork and "unclean animals," or the mixing of meat and milk, and which require ritual slaughter, are almost on a par with the Jewish dietary laws.

The Muslim laws of ritual purity (*tahara*), too, are almost identical with the Jewish legislation which served as their model. With respect to required ablutions, Islam is even stricter than Judaism. As those who are ritually impure are forbidden to pray, read the Quran or enter a mosque, the ritual bath (or natural bodies of waters) is as important in Islam as in Judaism. In their efforts to stamp out Judaizing and Muslimizing among the "New Christians" of Spain and Portugal, the Inquisitors kept a special lookout for New Christians given to bathing and washing their hands and feet.

Circumcision is the Muslim identification with "Abraham's covenant." It is performed on either the seventh day after birth or on the

1. S.D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs*, 3rd ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), p. 21.

2. Ibid., p. 27.

seventh birthday of the boy. It is the sign-and-mark of the Muslim just as it is of the Jew.

Muslim traditional scholarship is a counterpart of Jewish traditional scholarship. It concentrates on *sharia*, which is believed to be God-given and, hence, definitive and unchangeable. But it is also taken for granted that *sharia* requires exposition and commentary. In the manner of Jewish traditional scholarship, Muslim scholarship fulfills itself in commentaries and in responsa.

Like traditional Judaism, Islam has no clergy. Muslim and Jewish religious leaders are students of the law, ordained for rendering legal decisions on the basis of the codes. Muslim religious services, like traditional synagogue services, do not require clergy-functionaries.

In the pre-modern Jewish community, Torah was the priority to which all other concerns had to yield. Study of the *sharia* still commands this importance in tradition-oriented Muslim communities. The *madrasa* (corresponding to the *beit hamedrash*) is as important in Islam as is the yeshivah in Judaism. Their heads, the *ulama* ("learners"), are held in singular respect and wield great authority.

The life style of the *madrasa* student is similar to that of the yeshivah counterpart. He frequently leaves his home and family to study under a great teacher in a famous *madrasa*. Like yesterday's and today's yeshivah students, the *madrasa* students are supported by the local community. And, like Jewish householders in pre-modern times, Muslims provided "days of eating" for the students and vied for the privilege of rendering personal service to the *ulama* and their disciples, carrying water to the *madrasa* and doing mental chores about the place.

* * *

Sufism is the principal Muslim mystical movement that emerged as a revolt against Muslim rationalism. It grew into a mass movement as did Hasidism, thanks to its appeal to plain people. The leaders (*shayks*) of the Sufist orders — they are still flourishing in many Muslim countries — are counterparts of the Hasidic *Rebbs*. Like the *Rebbs*, they inherit their positions and are believed to possess supernatural gifts of clairvoyance. Like the *Rebbe's qvittel*, the *shaykh's fayd* is sought by the sick, the childless and those in trouble. The acceptance of the authority of the *shaykh* by his followers is as complete as is the hasid's submission to the *Rebbe*.

Islam is a national religion. Muhammad and his Four Companions, the first Caliphs, brought the new revelation to the Arabs, although they did not restrict Islam just to them. The Muslim religious community is the peoplehood community of the *umma*. Islam has "a holy language," Arabic, and a "holy city," Mecca, to which every Muslim should make a pilgrimage. Although Islam claims universal sway, it has not compromised its national character. Whereas Paul de-nationalized the young Christian community, transforming it into a community of faith only, Islam holds

fast to its Arab roots and, hence, it is more than a religion. It is a religious civilization which fuses the Arabic national culture with the Muslim faith. Mordecai M. Kaplan's definition of "Judaism as a religious civilization," fits Islam as well.

Like the Jewish civilization, Islam is the product of evolution and selective assimilation. It has been characterized as "an Arab recast of Israel's religion." The impact of the Hebrew Bible on Islam is well known. Less well known, but equally significant, is what Muhammad learned of Talmud and Midrash, albeit frequently in garbled forms, from his Jewish neighbors and teachers.

* * *

Zionism is the secularization of the Jewish hope of restoration in the Land of Israel. It transformed the religious ideal of the Return into a purposive political movement. Arab nationalism, too, is a secular movement and, like Zionism, was inspired by the religious hope for the restoration of Islamic sway. Arab nationalism is as inseparable from Islam as is Zionism from Judaism because exile is another significant similarity of fate between Jews and Arabs. The Jewish exile extends over almost two thousands years. The Arab peoples of the Middle East were "exiles" in their own countries under non-Arab rule for close to one thousand years. Like the Jews, the Arabs suffered most under Christian governments. While the seven Crusades did not succeed in wresting the Holy Land from the Muslims, they visited identical persecutions upon "Jesus' enemies in the Holy Land" and upon Jews in the path of the Crusaders' armies. The Jewish chronicles describing the Crusaders' annihilation of Jewish communities have a counterpart in the Arab chronicles recording Muslim martyrdom at the hands of the "Soldiers of Christ."

Jews and Muslims were also united in suffering after the re-establishment of Christian rule in Spain. It culminated in the expulsion of the Jews in 1492 and celebrated its victory over the Moors by forced conversions, the burning of Arabic manuscripts and books, and by stamping out "Islamizing" with the same harshness that was applied to "Judaizing." With equal fervor, the Inquisition pursued "reconciling" crypto-Muslims and crypto-Jews. Its torture chambers witnessed the agonies of "relapsed" Muslims and Jews and in the fires of the auto-da-fé the *Shema* mingled with the confession of faith of the *Moriscos*. The Muslims proved as hard to convert and to assimilate as did the Jews and, finally, Philip III expelled them from Spain in 1609. There were about half a million "stubborn Muslims;" approximately the same number of Jews had been expelled from Spain in 1492. It is estimated that, in the course of the Reconquest, about three millions Muslims were killed or banished.³

3. Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 5th ed. (London: Macmillan, 1951), p. 556.

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While the modern symbiosis of Judaism and Christian civilization led to Jewish alienation and the stagnation of Jewish creativeness in the realm of Hebraic culture, the symbiosis of Judaism and Muslim civilization provided the incentive for the Golden Age of Hebrew literature. Its scene was not limited to Muslim Spain, but comprised the entire realm of Islam. The rise and flowering of medieval Jewish philosophy took place in Egypt where Isaac Israeli (ca. 850-940), Saadia (882-942) and Maimonides (1135-1204) structured their philosophical systems by borrowing from the Muslim thinkers who had introduced Greek thought in Arabic translations. In Babylonia (Iraq), Talmudic studies continued to flourish for five centuries after the edition of the Babylonian Talmud (ca. 500 C.E.).

After the expulsion from Spain and Portugal, large numbers of Jewish refugees found havens in Muslim countries where they had been preceded by other refugees from Christian persecution and, as a result, Muslim North Africa and Turkey flowered as centers of Jewish creativeness in the 16th and 17th centuries. The rise of Safed as the hub of the Kabbalah and of Rabbinic studies, also in the 16th and 17th centuries, owed much to the Muslim rulers. The situation of the Jews in Palestine under Islam was so favorable that Rabbi Jacob Berach (ca. 1475-1546), a refugee from Christian Spain who had settled in Safed, advocated the renewal of the classical form of *semikhah* (ordination) as the first step toward the reconstitution of the Sanhedrin and Jewish national restoration. The plan failed only because of the opposition of the Jerusalem rabbis, led by Levi Ibn Habib, who held that the messianic age was not yet in the offing.

* * *

As people with revealed Scriptures (Muhammad coined the phrase "People of the Book" — applying it to both Jews and Christians), Jews and Christians were "protected minorities" in Muslim countries but still "foreigners," the *dhimmis* of the Muslim states. As "foreigners," they were not equal with Muslims and the "Pact of Omar" obliged them to wear a distinctive identification sign or badge — the *ghiyar* — usually yellow for Jews and blue for Christians. However, Leon Poliakov notes that "for the Arabs the color yellow did not have the pejorative sense it later acquired in Europe. On the contrary, it was looked upon with favor."⁴ In the Muslim countries, the *ghiyar* was an "identification card."

Other articles of the Pact of Omar provided that Jews and Christians should abide by the "zoning laws" of the Muslim majority: they could not build houses higher than those of Muslims and were forbidden to make a public display of their religions. Also, "they [Christians and Jews] shall not

4. Léon Poliakov, *The History of Antisemitism*, vol. II: *From Mohammed to the Marranos*, tr. from the French by Natalie Gerardie (New York: Vanguard Press, 1973), p. 36.

ride horses, neither thoroughbred nor common; they may, however, ride mules or donkeys." This restriction, however, was only lackadaisically enforced and is to be understood in the context of the medieval Muslim society where riding a horse was the privilege of a member of that society.

As foreigners, *dhimmis* were subject to special taxes — the land tax and the poll tax — in lieu of *zakat*, the tithe that Muslims had to pay. Indeed, the tax was imposed "with a degree of contempt . . . but it was also a gentle demand, for it was remuneration for the shelter we gave them."⁵ However, what mattered was that "the Jews resided in their respective countries as of right and not merely on temporary sufferance."⁶

Those who stir the fires of Jewish-Arab enmity make much of the fact that the Maimonides family were among the many Jews who fled from "Muslim intolerance" in Spain. But they withhold the information that the Maimunis and numerous other refugees settled in Egypt — a *Muslim country* — where Moses ben Maimon was not the only Jew to attain honor and position. The Almohades, whose rise to domination in North Africa and Spain caused the Maimunis to flee Cordova,

sought to suppress all opposing points of view among both Muslims and the religious minorities. (However) . . . compared with the pogroms and massacres which, especially after 1096, began to fill one sanguinary page after another in the Jewish annals in western lands, the Jewish communities of the Great Caliphate and its successor states enjoyed an enviable measure of life and limb. Nor were they exposed, with two major exceptions limited in scope and duration (i.e., under Al-Hakim and the Almohades), to those sudden withdrawals of religious toleration, expulsions, and forced conversions, which were to mar so much of medieval Jewish history in Christian Europe.⁷

Muslim authors, not excepting respected theologians, did fulminate against "non-believers." There was no lack of name-calling and insults. But

we have no record of the burning of any Jewish books by the Muslim authorities . . . Not a single reliable record of such a public performance under medieval Islam has come down to us. The mere fact that such an "obnoxious" book as that of Hivi al-Balki could . . . enjoy wide circulation for more than half a century, indicates a certain measure of forbearance, or impotence, on the part of communal organs, which had no parallel in the Christian Middle Ages.⁸

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Jews felt "at home" in the Islamic-Arab culture, so much so that they spoke and wrote Arabic as naturally as West European Jews spoke and

5. Ibid., p. 37 — quoting the famous Muslim jurist Mawerdi.

6. Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: JPS, 1952), Vol. III, p. 127f.

7. Ibid., p. 121

8. Ibid., p. 133 f.

wrote the languages of their respective countries *after* the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, when political reforms had partially emancipated them. Saadia, Maimonides, Yehuda Halevi and others would not have produced much of their work in Arabic if they had been surrounded by the type of virulent hatred that afflicted the Jews of the Christian countries. The Jewish-Muslim cultural symbiosis — an intimate interfaith and cross-cultural “dialogue” — came into being and endured because Islam recognized Judaism as a religion existing as of *legal* right, although not of the same high level as Islam. (Does any religion grant its own rank of “singular” truth to other faiths?).

The spontaneity with which, for almost a millenium and a half, the Jews of the Arab-Muslim countries spoke Arabic as their mother-tongue, is proof of the basic and profound difference between the situation of the Jews under Islam and the Jewish condition in the pre-Emancipation Christian countries. There is no Jewish literature in the European vernaculars — to say nothing of Jewish books in Latin — prior to Emancipation because the Jews of the Christian countries were ghettoized as well as self-alienated from the dominant Christian culture which denied Judaism's right to life. However, there is a vast and variegated Jewish literature in Arabic with a history of more than a millenium.

The generally favorable situation of the Jewish communities under Islam is also reflected in the type of Jewish literature of the Arab countries. Jews in Muslim countries wrote poetry, including sensuous love poems, and philosophical treatises. They travelled and wrote travelogues and reports on distant and relatively unknown Jewish communities. They were very much part of, and integrated into, their societies while yet fully retaining their Jewish identity, as may be seen from the Geniza documents cited in Goitein's *A Mediterranean Society*. By contrast, the Jewries of the medieval Christian countries did not write poetry, except dirges and mournful *piyuttim*, nor did they address themselves to the eternal questions in the philosophical manner of the Jewish thinkers under Islam. Always in the throes of insecurity, at best, and persecutions and expulsions as a rule, they lacked the freedom from fear and worry for engaging in not-to-Law and Bible-commentary related writing.

The difference between the poetry and philosophy-oriented literature of the Jewish communities under Islam and the commentaries-oriented concentration of the Jewries under Christianity — as well as the virtual absence of martyrologies in the former and their profusion in the latter — is proof of the seldom-disturbed security of the Jewish communities under Islam. The Islamic connection of Jews and Judaism is *sub specie aeternitatis*, the most significant and the most fruitful connection of the Jewish people.

Zionism and Judaism

YEHUDI ADAM

THE JEWISH PEOPLE IS UNIQUE. IT IS unique because from its very beginnings as a nation at Mt. Sinai it has seen in its existence not a supreme end and value but a task and destiny whose fulfillment is the purpose of that existence. When asked what it is to be a Jew, any Jew of pre-modern times could answer: It is to be a member of the people that was called into being by God in order to serve Him, irrespective of what others thought and did. Judaism is awareness of a spiritual task and destiny to which the Jewish people has committed and dedicated itself. In other words, Judaism is the will of the Jewish people to be what it ought to be. There can be no living Judaism without that will.

To have a task is neither virtue nor merit. Nor does it imply a special quality. When the Bible or the Jewish prayerbook speaks of the "Chosen People" it is giving expression to something that is the very opposite of what most people assume when they hear those words. When we have a choice we usually select what is best. Therefore, the words "Chosen People" sound like the "best people." But when, in his daily prayer, a believing Jew thanks God for having him made a Jew, the idea that the Jews are people with higher qualities is far from his mind. Indeed, he would have no reason to be thankful if the Jews had been chosen because they were better than others. For, if so, they would have received only what is due to them. The Jews of the past felt thankful for being Jews but were not proud of it. Only modern Jews, who have lost the belief that the Jewish people were chosen by God for a specific task and destiny, say that we should be proud. Seeing no reason why there should be a Jewish people they are afraid of feeling inferior. That is why they say: we have no reason to feel inferior, because our people is a nation like other nations; let us be proud of it.

It is for a different reason that, for most of the world, whether Jewish or not, the Jews seem to be unique. They are the only ancient people that survived and kept their identity up to the modern age, and they have done so under the most adverse and unnatural living conditions, dispersed over the globe and exposed to all sorts of deprivation, persecution and humiliation. Indeed, that there is still a Jewish people must appear as a miracle to anyone who is not familiar with the Jewish belief in the task and destiny of the Jewish people. It will seem to be even more miraculous when one remembers that the Jews have almost always been tempted to escape from their harsh lot by conversion to the religion of the surrounding world.

YEHUDI ADAM is the pen-name of a writer who is concerned with the spiritual substance of Jewish tradition in terms of modern thought.

Although some Jews did succumb to the temptation, the majority refused to abandon their holy task and destiny. If we know and understand the belief that animated the Jews throughout the age of religion, the survival of the Jewish people will be, for us, not a miracle but the natural effect of their living Judaism. Dedication to the fulfillment of their task and destiny made the Jewish people immortal. It imbued them with the conviction that their existence was of absolute value regardless of what they had to suffer, and maintained in them the unshakeable will to live and to have children who would carry on the holy task in defiance of whatever might happen. How could a people thus inspired cease to exist? Against the danger of total extermination by enemies, the Jewish people was protected by dispersion. Hence, the survival of the Jewish people was not a Jewish problem in the past. But when the belief in the task and destiny of the Jewish people faded away in the modern age, symptoms of disintegration made their appearance and survival became the foremost problem.

The history of the Jewish people is as different from that of other nations as is the Jewish people itself. It is not a story of wars, of defeats and victories, of political, economic, and cultural achievements and developments. Its most important events are catastrophic disasters, to which the Jewish people responded by turning inward and finding new ways to achieve their spiritual task and destiny. Thus, when the First Temple was destroyed, when land and state were lost and the people led away into captivity, synagogues were founded for study and prayer. When the Second Temple was destroyed, the leaders of the Jewish people developed a comprehensive system of ritual living by means of which Jews could live a Jewish life everywhere. When the Jews were expelled from Spain, Jewish mysticism became a living force. When the false Messiah, Sabbatai Zvi, converted to Islam and the illusion that the messianic age had come was shattered, Hassidism created a new mode of living Judaism.

In the modern age, the Jewish people have had to face the great challenge of rising anti-Semitism, climaxing in Hitler's extermination policy. Again the Jewish people responded, but in a manner which differs greatly from the responses with which it had met disasters in former times. When, in the era of emancipation, the gates to the modern world were opened to the Jews, they embraced western culture and all of its achievements with alacrity and enthusiasm. The modern world, which offered to them equal rights and citizenship and whose thought and knowledge they admired immensely, seemed to them superior to Jewish tradition in all respects. They gave themselves wholeheartedly to it and wanted to be nothing but equal participants in its culture. Judaism as a living way of thinking ceased to exist for them. When anti-Semitism destroyed the illusion that modern civilization could give the Jews what they had hoped for from the messianic age, they experienced it as a challenge and responded to it, not as heirs to Jewish tradition, but as products of the modern world. Oblivious of the task and destiny of the

Jewish people, they thought only of ending the tribulations and sufferings of *galut*. Thus there arose political Zionism, a movement aiming not at the fulfillment of the task and destiny of the Jewish people but at making of it a nation like any other nation living in its own land.

Political Zionism is a movement which has two aspects. It can be looked at from the view of what it has done for the Jews, and it can be looked at from the view of the task and destiny for which the Jewish people has lived and suffered for thousands of years. Bearing in mind that "Jewish" may mean "of the Jews" and "of Judaism," we may say: political Zionism is a thoroughly un-Jewish Jewish movement. The ideology of political Zionism is a negation of all that Judaism has stood for since the Hebrew tribes became a nation at Mt. Sinai.

Zionists often rail at assimilation. When doing so they think of non-Jewish customs, especially some of religious character and origin. They do not notice that political Zionism is itself the very acme of assimilation, for it is assimilation of the Jewish people as a whole to the spirit of the present western world which finds its most extreme expression in the unrestricted self-centeredness of nations claiming sovereignty, i.e., the right to do what they like and to pursue their aims and interests subject to no higher norms and values. There could never have been a Jewish ideology like political Zionism if assimilation had not estranged the Jews from Judaism.

So little are Zionists aware of the spiritual task and destiny of the Jewish people that they identify Judaism with the memory of the lost promised land and with the longing for return to it. Thus, they equate Zionism and Judaism. True, the Jews have never forgotten Jerusalem. Tradition kept it present in their minds, and the tribulations of *galut* fed the longing for it. They never lost hope that the time would come when *galut* would end, and that they would dwell again in the land that they believed God had given them. But, in pre-modern times, the Jewish memory and longing for that ancestral homeland was never divorced from their awareness of the Jewish task and destiny; the land never took the place of Judaism, as it does in the ideology of political Zionism. In Jewish tradition, the hope for a return to Jerusalem was closely linked to the hope for the advent of the Messianic age. When, at the end of the celebration on the eve of Passover the Jews said, "Next year in Jerusalem," they gave voice to their belief in the coming of the Messiah who would lead them to the Holy Land with the approval of all mankind in a world of lasting peace, justice and good will. The Jews of the age of religion did not believe in a return of the Jewish people to the Holy Land in an unchanged world with the means of that world, which would inevitably involve the Jewish people in all the evils of that world and would expose it to largely uncontrollable dangers. They had learned from history that the fulfillment of the eternal Jewish hope cannot be forced.

It goes without saying that there is nothing in Judaism to object to a return to the Holy Land and to its rebuilding. But for anyone who is

sufficiently familiar with the Jewish sources and with Jewish history to know that dedication to a spiritual task and destiny is the very essence of Judaism, which has made the Jewish people unique and immortal, it is a plain fact that Judaism and the ideology of political Zionism are mutually exclusive. Whoever affirms the political Zionist's aim to normalize the Jewish people repudiates Judaism, and whoever understands what Judaism is and stands up for it implicitly rejects political Zionism, whether he is aware of it or not. But, of course, that holds true only where there is a living Judaism and not where there is only something that is a mere shadow or wraith of what Judaism was in the past. If that is correct, then, since hardly any Jew today is aware of the incompatibility of Judaism and political Zionism, it follows that there is no living Judaism today, and that, indeed, is so. What we have today is not a living Judaism but merely a memory of a Judaism that was alive in a bygone age. True, we have the institutions of the past and keep them going because they have a certain value which has nothing to do with what Judaism really is. But anyone who protests that there is a living Judaism because there are rabbis and synagogues and because Jewish festivals are celebrated and *mizvot* are performed bespeaks only his lack of insight into what Judaism is.

There is no living Judaism, and there can be no living Judaism as long as a false idea about what is Judaism is generally accepted by the Jews of the modern age as though it were an evident truth: that false idea is that Judaism is a religion. The word Judaism, no less than the word religion, both of which are foreign to Jewish tradition, derives from a misunderstanding of the nature of Judaism. The word Judaism has been coined in order to have one word for "Jewish religion," as Christianity is one word for Christian religion. The cause of the misconception is that there is neither in the modern languages nor in Jewish tradition a word for what Judaism really is. Because of its uniqueness, the Jewish phenomenon cannot be placed into any of the classes of phenomena for which language possesses a word, without misunderstanding its nature. In pre-modern Jewish thought it was not necessary to classify Judaism. The believing Jew of the past had the Torah, which was a name for something unique. For him it was the word of God, not a human phenomenon comparable to other human phenomena with which it could be placed into one class. It was when Jews started to think in terms of non-Jewish modern thought that they came to see the Jewish phenomenon from outside, as did the non-Jews, and to understand it as a religion comparable to Christianity. There was a powerful incentive for the Jews to regard Judaism as a religion. They had been promised equality and citizenship on the assumption that they would be citizens of the modern state like others, differing only by their religion, which was considered a private affair. Moreover, Jewish tradition is, in some sense, a religious tradition. But what is overlooked was that religion in the sense in which Jewish tradition can be justly called a religious tradition is something very different from religion in the

sense in which the word is commonly employed and understood.

Jewish tradition may be called religious because its whole thought and interpretation of the world is centered on the belief in a living, personal God. For the Jews of the age of religion, as for Jewish tradition, the totality of all that consisted of God and the world. God was thought of as a living being with a mind similar to the human mind but free of its limitations and imperfections. God was by no means only the creator of the world. Above all, He was the ruler of the world, in which nothing could happen that He did not want to happen. As a living being, the God of Jewish tradition could see, hear, think, judge, will, decide, act. He was believed to be concerned with every human creature and, especially, with the Jewish people, and all events which were not results of the order of the cosmos as it was then known were interpreted as responses of God to human conduct. Furthermore, God was not only the creator and ruler, He was also the revealer who had made known His will to the Jewish people in the Torah. Thus, everything was seen in relation to God.

Religion in the sense in which it is generally understood today is belief or faith (faith is trusting belief) in metaphysical, specifically religious matters, particularly on so-called ultimate questions. It is not a view of the world which is knowable through science, but of that which transcends it and is not accessible to human knowledge. It is experience of the transcendent and it is the feelings and emotions which accompany such experiences or arise from them. It is belief in something which cannot be known. The origin of the current idea of religion lies in Christianity, which is, in its essence, a message of a divine mystery. It proclaims and teaches what God has done for mankind through Jesus. A Christian is one who accepts that message, regardless of whether he is, or is not, a member of a Christian church. That is why, for Christianity, religion is belief, and why Christian thinking takes it for granted that every other religion is also belief, differing from Christianity in what it believes, and especially in what it does not believe, namely, in Jesus as the Savior. Therefore, Christianity and, with it, all modern thought, understands Judaism as a belief, and that notion has been accepted uncritically by assimilated Jewry.

But Judaism is not belief or faith. Its essential content does not consist in a divine mystery. Compare the Jewish Bible, called by Christians the Old Testament, with the New Testament. The latter is the story of the life and death of the divine Savior and of the beginnings of the Christian church. The Jewish Bible is the history of the Jewish people and the record of the divine law, whose fulfillment is the purpose for which the Jewish people has come into being and to which it has committed itself.

What, then, is Judaism if it is misconceived as religion in the accepted sense of the word? It is — nothing; at least nothing Jewish. Judaism is not a message to be believed, it proclaims no divine mysteries. Like anyone else, a Jew may have experiences which may be interpreted as personal revelation or as encounters with God. But Judaism does not consist of such

experiences and is not a faith grounded in such experiences. The God who becomes present in such experiences is not the living God of Jewish tradition, as will be shown immediately. The Jew of the past took the existence of the living God as self-evident. However, Judaism did not consist in faith in God, but in the service that the Jewish people owed to Him so that the Jewish community could be seen as a kingdom of God.

Can we not go back to Jewish tradition and to its way of serving God? No. When we perform a *mizvah* or attend a service we can only pretend that ours is the religion of our ancestors. For, although we may subscribe to the basic traditional tenets and practice all the *mizvot*, our thought and life cannot be God-centered, and our religious life cannot but be an area separated from the rest of our life and thought. What changed when the Jews entered the modern world is not only their attitude toward religion, as most of our leaders seem to think. The God-centered worldview of the age of religion, in which Jewish tradition is embedded, has become obsolete, and with it have gone all of the important traditional teachings about God and His relation to man, to human life and to the Jewish people. The religious worldview, which saw everything in relation to God, was a product of imagination. It could not survive in an age which possesses the modern knowledge of the world. Modern man knows that all causes of events and phenomena lie in the world itself, which is an autonomous self-contained whole, and all events take place according to the immanent order of the world, which science describes as laws. There is no room for a living God who acts from decision to decision in response to human action and behavior and has revealed His will to the Jewish people in the commandments of the Torah. From respect or love for tradition, or for the sake of the Jewish people, modern Jews may subscribe to the tenets of tradition. But they cannot have the belief of their ancestors. Is there a modern Jew who believes, and can believe, that a human being or a people could enter into a covenant, a contractual relationship, with God? Is there a modern Jew who can believe that, in order to free the Israelites, God, or His angel (can a modern Jew believe that there are angels?) killed the firstborn of the Egyptians? Is there a modern Jew who can believe that God spoke out of a burning bush to Moses, or that God came down — from the non-existing heaven — on Mt. Sinai in a cloud with thunder and lightning and Himself wrote the Ten Commandments on the tablets of stone? The Jew of the past could accept the teachings of tradition without asking whether they were true because within the religious outlook the teachings of the Torah seemed plausible, and there was no knowledge which contradicted them. But no modern Jew can believe in the living God of our ancestors, and whoever thinks that he does believe in Him deceives himself.

Does that mean that Judaism is finished? Only if we cling to the axiomatic assumption that Judaism is a religion and cannot be anything else and that the religious Jewish tradition is the final, lasting form of

Judaism. Surely it is difficult to free oneself of that preconceived idea if he fails to realize that when one worldview is succeeded by another, the ideas and beliefs characteristic of the old worldview vanish with it but that the spirit which found expression through them can survive if it is articulated in beliefs and ideas which are in harmony with the living thought of the new age. We, today, see clearly that all thought is human thought, even if it claims to be of superhuman origin, the very possibility of the distinction between human thought and divine thought being a product of human thought. Since Jewish tradition, too, is human thought it is, on the one hand, conditioned by the thought and outlook of its age and, on the other hand, expressive of human impulses and aspirations which are not transient but enduring and capable of being articulated in any age.

In this essay only a few hints can be given of what Judaism is if it is spoken of in terms of the contemporary universe of thought. Judaism sprang from a vision of a world that is free from man-made evils. It is the undertaking of a people to realize that vision within its own sphere. From that vision there arose, in the age of religion, which interpreted reality through its belief in living personal deities, the belief in a spiritual, perfect God, who loves good and hates evil and wants man to choose good and reject evil. From the same source there sprang the belief in the task and destiny of the Jewish people to serve the perfect spiritual God. In the post-religious age, in which religion is no longer the medium through which the world is seen, the Jewish vision of a human world without man-made evils must lead to a conception of man and his life governed by the higher forces of the human mind, which are found nowhere in nature. We may call those higher forces of the human mind the spirit, and we can express the meaning and aim of Judaism by saying: the task and destiny of the Jewish people is to be a spirit-governed community.

The modern world in an essentially unspiritual world. It originated from a vision of man's power to conquer nature by knowledge. It has no vision of a humanity without man-made evils. Like ancient paganism, the modern world lives on the level of nature, which does not know the distinction between good and evil and in which there is a never-ending struggle for survival and for a larger share in the good things of the world. Zionism, being a product of the spirit of the modern world, not of the spirit of Judaism, has engulfed the Jewish people in that struggle. It has thereby exchanged the passive evils of *galut* for the active evils of political and military life. It is not aware of the meaning of Judaism and the spiritual demands implied in it. Designed by assimilated Jews, it knows nothing of the spiritual task and destiny of the Jewish people. Today, Zionism is identified with Judaism to such a degree that most Jews who are active in Jewish life consider it a duty of every Jew to be a Zionist. But the verdict of the future will be that the ideology of political Zionism was a deviation from the task and destiny of the Jewish people.

Aḥad Ha-Am and Leopold Zunz: Two Perspectives on the “Wissenschaft des Judentums”

ALFRED GOTTSCHALK

WHEN *WISSENSCHAFT DES JUDENTUMS* WAS founded in the 1820s, it entered the historical scene with a singular purpose which does not prevail in today's scholarly studies. Specifically, Jewish *Wissenschaft* did not originate from the mere desire to clarify and understand nor from the timeless wish to know or to improve on knowledge already gained. Rather, it came into being to take care of certain conditions in the life of Jews, namely, to help overcome difficulties which had arisen in the post-Mendelssohnian period when Jews went through the process of leaving the ghetto and entering modern society. Life carries with it both essential and accidental accretions, the organically genuine and the foreign elements that are acquired on the long march through the millennia. The scholarly study of any people's history and creativity separates the genuine from the false, the permanent from the passing. This was the faith of the ideological theorists of the early 1800s and Leopold Zunz, the founder of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, shared it.

He and his colleagues at the *Culturverein* established modern Jewish studies. Operating within the framework of general scholarship, they used its methods in order to secure Judaism and, after having secured it, to guarantee its continuous validity. In this sense, the *Zeitschrift* of the *Culturverein* stated:

[T]he establishment of a science of Judaism seems to be a necessity of our age . . . It is manifest everywhere that the fundamental principle of Judaism is again in a state of inner ferment, striving to assume a shape in harmony with the spirit of the times. But in accordance with the age this development can only take place through the medium of science.¹

In other words, Judaism had to be scientifically certified. In that shape it could enter the modern world and withstand all efforts to expel it.

Wissenschaft des Judentums would also have an influence on the individual Jew. It would draw from Jewish tradition a body of valid Jewish

1. The programmatic article in the *Zeitschrift* was written by Immanuel Wolf, a member of the *Culturverein*. The quotation is from the English translation by Lionel E. Kochan, "On the Concept of a Science of Judaism (1822)," p. 204, which appeared in *Year Book II* of the Leo Baeck Institute (London, 1957), pp. 194-204.

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knowledge from which he could shape his Judaism. It would provide him with a Judaism based on, and generated by, the Jewish past but scientifically filtered and defined so as to result in concepts which conformed to the texture of the modern mind. (As a brief aside, it might be interesting to point out that where, today, the term "tradition" comes easily to mind and pen, in the early days of *Wissenschaft* the corresponding word was "past," *Vergangenheit*.) Using contemporary terminology one might say, with a slight degree of exaggeration, that *Wissenschaft* was regarded not only as a process enabling modernity, but also as an instrumentality for Jewish survival.

It is not difficult to see that this view still prevails. More than ever before, Jews are being admonished to study. Adult education, as presented by almost every synagogue, certainly almost every Conservative and Reform one, is often offered as an academic course and not merely as a pleasant literary pastime for the layman. Our congregations now invite professors for a weekend and call them — the designation is extremely revealing — "scholars in residence." The study of Judaism is regarded as one of the most important activities that a Jew can engage in as a Jew. Next to the distinctly religious activities of a Jew, it appears as one that contributes to making a nominal Jew into a "practicing" one. Often, in fact, Jewish study becomes a surrogate for religious activities and the sole, or strongest, expression of a person's Judaism. Thus, we have the Jewish layman who participates in a mediated way, in Jewish scholarship, and such participation is recognized as a valid form of Jewish living, of Jewish "existence."

There is no parallel to this condition in the Christian world. The Christian religionist is not being told that his knowledge of the history of Christianity or of the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas adds to his religious standing as a Christian. There are almost no churches which cultivate, for their congregants, Christian studies in the way that synagogues organize Jewish studies. All of this underlines how *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, particularly where it took the place of traditionalist Jewish learning, reached far beyond the circle of scholars. Judaism did not draw a demarcation line between academic endeavor and the layman's interest in its results. In fact, it often appeared that the emotional and religious involvement of the Jewish layman in the findings and formulations of *Jüdische Wissenschaft* were stronger than those of the scholars themselves.

Like any other Jew who had been brought up exclusively on Biblical and Talmudic knowledge and the traditional ways of Jewish learning, and was eager to escape from them into the wide, glorious world of modern culture and literature, Ahad Ha-Am used Jewish *Wissenschaft* as a tool for his "liberation." From that encounter stems his lifelong attitude toward it — one marked by diminishing attraction and increasing critique. Though he once regarded it as an indispensable instrumentality for the acquisition

of much-longed-for learning, he very soon arrived at a rejection of some of its central concepts. He believed that the scholarly approaches to which it was accustomed led to assimilation and, in his biting critique, he emphasized that *Wissenschaft* had failed adequately to comprehend the Jewish national element as it reflects itself in the Bible and in the early periods of Jewish history. He lumps together the German school of *Wissenschaft* and *Haskalah*, the Jewish enlightenment that bore the stamp of Russian and Galician Jewry. Both, he points out, neglected to focus on the genius of Hebrew culture when they set out to modernize Judaism. They made no attempt, he says, to recognize the land of Israel, the Hebrew language and the people of Israel as Jewish national elements organically bound together in an integrated Jewish ideology. Aḥad Ha-Am was a cultural Zionist. He did not believe in traditional Judaism; neither did he believe in the kind of Judaism which the Reform Movement had shaped. Yet, some of his concepts, such as "the mission of Israel," derived from the ideology of the Reform Movement which he criticized without mercy, and other concepts, such as the "need for renewal" were genuine to the pragmatic utterances of the early school of Jewish *Wissenschaft* which he denounced with equal vigor. His "spiritual Zionism" propounded the perennial "essentiality" of Israel.

In many respects, Aḥad Ha-Am's denunciation of Jewish *Wissenschaft* was unfounded or unfair. When Zunz outlined the range of Jewish history, he laid considerable emphasis on the *factual* data that are contained in it and that characterize it: on the way that Jews lived, on the manner in which they were constituted in history, on the kinds of cohesion which determined the character of their living together. He includes, among others,

the position of the Jew in world history; their former and present position, political *and* spiritual [sic!]; tracing them back from their respective present places of residence to their old community [sic!] . . . physical conditions, their causes and consequences . . . ; inner constitution, political or communal . . .²

And so he continues, through fourteen paragraphs. All of this material was either unknown to Aḥad Ha-Am or disregarded by him, and it goes a considerable way to defuse his censuring of Jewish *Wissenschaft* for its excessive inclination to depoliticize Jewish history.

Furthermore, at least as far as intent goes, there are obvious parallels between the *Wissenschaft* that Aḥad Ha-Am criticizes and his own writings in which he wove together a tapestry of ideology where seemingly contradictory threads were held together by his nationalist orientation. According to him, the national spirit of Judaism was still in a state of evolution. The people's spirit had atrophied in the diaspora and its lack of dynamism had created a spiritual crisis which had to be resolved before the future of Judaism could be secured in the modern world. Propelled by

2. *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin, 1875), vol. 1, p. 137 f.

such thought, Aḥad Ha-Am concentrated on an ideology of renewal. This is the ever-recurring theme of his writing.

Yet, unlike other theorists who put the problem of the Jew before the problem of the survival of Judaism, he

put redemption into the center of the nation's thought, not because of external persecution, divine visitations, or evil decrees, but simply because he could not conceive of an honorable existence for the image of God in exile . . . You might call it the transmigration of the idea of "the Shekinah in exile," the realization that there is no power of resistance without the revival of the Shekinah, the spirit, the soul — call it what you will — and that there is nothing more important than building this power of resistance within ourselves. . . . [He] was interested in all Jewish problems of the spirit. He saw Eretz Israel as the embodiment of the prophetic vision, but only in the sense that it was to serve as a spiritual center.³

An argument can be made that Aḥad Ha-Am's tendency towards spiritualization is no weaker, and is, possibly, stronger than Zunz's. Zunz, both as a theoretician and a practitioner of Jewish *Wissenschaft*, is close to the realities of Jewish history, yet Aḥad Ha-Am never recognizes this, although he sometimes does use the findings of Zunz. Also, in his beginnings and in some of his main works, such as *Die gottesgeschichtlichen Vorträge*, Zunz demonstrates his strong awareness of the "national" quality of Jewish literary and cultural productivity — another facet of early *Wissenschaft des Judentums* which Aḥad Ha-Am overlooks.

For example, the philosophy of history which Zunz took over from the Historical School enabled him to regard the Jews as a peculiar "historical entity recognized by world history." Jewish history and Jewish literature are not identical with the general world spirit; they form a particular entity of that spirit, reflecting Judaism as an organic whole. Jewish literature is an organism in its own right; it is "the literature of a nation." Jewish literature does not have an accidental arbitrary origin; it is no "idle oratory, no haphazard writing," Zunz states, referring to prophetic literature and the Haggadah. As for the Midrash, its productions "are utterances of an activity founded in the life, the ideas and the interests of the Jewish people in which the people, so to speak, has always collaborated." The outstanding works of the Halakhah, as well as of the Haggadah,

like the Law and the prophets, are national writings, confronted with which the later generations almost voluntarily gave up their autonomy; they became the property of all, results of a millennial development, monuments of the nation's life and products of its most significant minds.⁴

Other statements by Zunz make us wonder about the onesidedness of Aḥad Ha-Am's polemic against him. Here are a few additional samples.

3. Chaim Nachman Bialik, "On Aḥad Ha-Am," *Jewish Frontier* (November, 1964): 16-17.

4. Fritz Bamberger, "Zunz's Conception of History," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, vol. XI, 1941, p. 17 f.

"Constitution and priesthood guarded in the Hebrew state the Law and the Ark of the Covenant, the visible foci of the nationality." When the Jewish state ceased to exist, Jewish nationality did not cease to exist. Though Jewish "autonomy" was destroyed, Jewish "nationality found its center in the Holy Scriptures." The "Synagogue" did not replace nationality, it became its "sole bearer." If prophecy had been "an unconditional expression of national life," such was also the character of the Haggadah. In Zunz's term, "the Jewish writers were *National-Schriftsteller*, national writers, and *Volkslehrer*, teachers of the people." When Jewish literature spoke of the Rabbis as "our teachers" or "our sages," it was to mark them as authorities in national literature. Zunz was aware that Jewish history was a sequence of foreign influences trying to repress the national element, but he believed that the efforts toward "the preservation of national literature" never ceased.

It certainly cannot be part of this paper to probe more deeply into the ideology of Zunz. But one more point should be made because it also applies to Aḥad Ha-Am. It is extremely difficult to pinpoint what Zunz understood by "nationality" and what were its essential ingredients. This problem exists not only in the Jewish realm. Any kind of *Volksgeist* or national genius becomes highly elusive when one sets out to define it. Aḥad Ha-Am himself tried different approaches in order to define the unifying element of Jewish culture. Less than Zunz's, his definitions derive from varied sources, in fact from varied philosophies.

In a nation's culture, [Aḥad Ha-Am explained in one of his essays], there is something which has a reality of its own: it is the concrete expression of the best minds of the nation in every period of its existence. The nation expresses itself in certain definite forms which remain for all time, and which is no longer dependent on those who created them, any more than a fallen apple is dependent on the tree from which it fell.⁵

Such a statement may apply, of course, to a great many concepts of culture and, *au fond*, it does nothing more than state that culture may be examined as to its psychological genesis or evaluated according to its objective worth. Or does it mean that in a people's history there are creative periods when its genius is active and its spirit productive, and others when creativity is lacking or at a low ebb, and the nation rests on, or luxuriates in, the creative periods of the past? There appear to be in Aḥad Ha-Am's writings sufficient instances to warrant such an approach. He holds that the Biblical period was such an era of creative power and he seems to feel that this creative power continued to communicate itself in later periods. In fact, he says, "the Bible, Talmud and *Shulḥan Arukh* are simply three different steps in the process of the development of one essence — the Jewish national spirit — in accordance with the circumstances and the requirements of different epochs in history."⁶ This *Volks-*

5. Aḥad Ha-Am, *Selected Essays*, tr. L. Simon (Philadelphia, 1912), p. 259.

6. *Kol Kitvei Aḥad Ha-Am* (Tel Aviv, 1956), p. 272.

geist permeates the entire existence of the Jewish people. Suffusing every aspect of life, this spirit, "a national ego on the analogy of the individual self," represents the creative force of the people and is a manifestation of its will to live. Aḥad Ha-Am conceives the national organism and its propelling force in Spencerian terms. Analogous to no other physical organism, the Jewish national organism is governed by a natural basic drive which he calls *ha-kium ha-leumi*, the national instinct for self-preservation.

This concept is interesting for two reasons. First, into the organic philosophy of the Historical School, which Aḥad Ha-Am seemed to share with the early *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, it introduces nineteenth century Spencerian philosophy, a kind of developmental materialism which is found in many of the naturalistic *Populärphilosophen* of the second half of that century. This addition eliminates, or certainly substantially weakens, the influence of the philosophical idealism which Geiger and others adopted in their development of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. That idealism blended with religious thought without major difficulties; Spencerian evolutionism did not. In fact, it usually led to a break with religion and such a break also occurred in Aḥad Ha-Am's thought. The transcendent God was replaced by the national will to live, and Jewish ethics, no longer divinely inspired, is merely an outcome of the Jewish nation's natural perception of the moral sense.

Once Aḥad Ha-Am arrived at this definition of the Jewish *Volksgeist*, it carried him toward significant conclusions. The Jewish national spirit is the instrumentality which will bring about the revival of modern Jewry by impregnating "the heart" of the present generation with the true and potent impetus of national determination. It is this spirit which he found in the truly Jewish creativity of the past and which, he maintained, was the sole legitimate motivation of Jewish activity in the present, that becomes a criterion for measuring the national value of current Jewish phenomena.

One of the items thus examined and measured was Jewish *Wissenschaft*. Research for its own sake did not interest Aḥad Ha-Am. For him it was plain luxury, and only scientific work produced in immediate consonance with "the Jewish national spirit" was recognized by him. Applying this yardstick, he postulates that only literature written in Hebrew can be regarded as national literature of the Jewish people. Generally, he accepts *Haskalah* literature and the preceding literature of the Hasidim. Specifically, however, he is highly critical of both. He laments that *Haskalah* literature had become a haven for dullards and mediocrities who slavishly imitated and translated inconsequential material. Its products were imports and not original to the Jewish genius. It was a purveyor of foreign ideas, badly presented in style and form, and incapable of appealing as something intrinsic to Jewish life and characteristic of it.

Part of this criticism was deserved, and is due to Aḥad Ha-Am's own exemplary standards of literary style. But another part of it is due to his

dogmatism and his historical myopia. These are particularly evident in his critique of Moses Mendelssohn's translation of the Bible into German and of the subsequent endeavors of the early practitioners of Jewish *Wissenschaft*. Ahad Ha-Am entirely overlooks the fact that Mendelssohn, Orthodox and traditional Jew that he was, rejected assimilation. He has no place for it in his philosophy and he rejects it on numerous occasions in his writings and letters. Mendelssohn's aim was to purify the language of his contemporary Jews, to improve their vernacular, and to educate them to use a pure Hebrew and a pure German, instead of the mixture of both, which was then current. Ironically, Ahad Ha-Am, the Hebraist who insisted on the classic excellence of the language, never realized that Mendelssohn's purposes and his own with respect to the Hebrew language were the same.

Ahad Ha-Am saw *Haskalah* and *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in a strange relationship. According to him, the positive efforts of German *Haskalah*, as well as the critique emanating from it, led to the overthrow of the strongholds of the nation, uprooting not only the primitive beliefs and outworn customs of religious Judaism, but damaging the very center of what had constituted Jewish national life and unity. As he states it, this destruction created a void which some filled by building great synagogues and preaching vacuous sermons, while others, the "bigger men," turned to Jewish *Wissenschaft* in an attempt to overcome the shortcomings of *Haskalah*. He characterizes the literature resulting from this attempt as analogous to a piece of writing in which the preface is full of praise and reverence for Israel and its national traditions and heritage, while the body of the work, the scientific parts, digs into the works of mere commentators and punctuators, dealing with lifeless liturgical compositions and other arid materials without which the world would have been not a bit poorer. He contemptuously condemns the followers of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* for having been content with "tombstones and synagogue chants."

This critique did not die with him. *Wissenschaft des Judentums* is still being blamed for the excesses of some of its proponents and the dull exercises of some of its less inspired devotees. As a rebuttal to this argument I refer to the penetrating introduction which Gerson D. Cohen contributed to the 20th volume of the Leo Baeck Institute Year Book. In his essay, entitled "German Jewry as Mirror of Modernity," he stresses the historical legitimacy of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.

Critical scholarship became the first significant effort at a meaningful Jewish response to a wave of Jewish defection in the nineteenth century and to the intellectual climate that had made traditional form and theory obsolete. This effort at regeneration and reaffirmation of the Jewish legacy became the outstanding and characteristic feature of German-Jewish leadership of every hue and cast (p. xxv).

More specifically:

If Judaism was to develop and gain a fresh relevance for contemporary Jewry, it could do so only by developing in the spirit and by the laws of its own inner history. Hence, each school of scholar-theologians — Reform, Historical, Orthodox — sought to pinpoint and describe the structure of rabbinic faith and literature, and thereby to gain not only new insight into the sources themselves but the foundations for legitimatizing their respective religious responses to the contemporary world. No one school attained a monopoly on excellence in this area of research. The study of post-Biblical literature and religion was illuminated by brilliant fruits of research from the pens of leaders of all three tendencies in German Jewry (p. xxvi).

And summarizing this,

German-Jewish scholarship was a massive effort at reinfusing vitality into what many Jews had come to regard as a fossil that was totally irrelevant to contemporary spiritual life. In the reconquest of the past and in the mastery of the dynamics of history — of law, liturgy, philosophy — the scholars hoped to provide the rationale and motivations for adherence and the guidelines for a spiritual rebirth and future creativity. Zunz never pretended otherwise . . . (p. xxvii).

Contrast with this view the judgment of Aḥad Ha-Am:

One of the founders of the movement of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Zunz saw in it only [sic] the opportunity of converting the nations to a more friendly attitude towards Jews and to establish the great ideal of those days — equal rights.⁷

The attitude of Aḥad Ha-Am toward later phases of *Jüdische Wissenschaft* is equally narrow and lacking in historical understanding. He knew Jewish *Wissenschaft*. He quoted it when it suited his purposes, but he had no eye for the historical circumstances which made it develop in different modes and different directions. In fact, it seems that Aḥad Ha-Am had little genuine historical sense. His own criteria for Jewishness, the presence of the innate Jewish will for survival, the Hebrew language, were yardsticks set once and for all time, and the land of Israel, as a national goal, is for him more strongly idea than historical pressing reality. It is understandable that as a political thinker and pamphleteer he was not primarily interested in the advancement of scholarship. Considering that he relentlessly pleaded for the elimination of Jewish illiteracy among the Jews of his time, the reception which he granted to the first modern Jewish encyclopaedia comes as a surprise. He regarded as a lasting reproach and a national disgrace the fact that the large American Jewish encyclopaedia, which appeared in the years 1901–1906, was written in English, instead of in Hebrew.

Wissenschaft des Judentums is a historical science. Its founder, Leopold Zunz, influenced by modern scholarship as it had developed since the beginning of the 19th century, had put that mark on it. Zunz himself was fundamentally a *Literarhistoriker*, a literary historian, who traced the de-

7. Ibid., p. 178.

velopment of literature through history and showed its dependence on historical conditions and circumstances.

For Aḥad Ha-Am, the Bible was the blueprint of the evolution of Jewish national existence. Criticism of a radical nature would revise the lines of that blueprint, blur its outlines and undermine its authority. For this reason, he had little taste and no use for modern Biblical studies and, rather, relied on the *textus receptus*, untouched by alien revisionism. Thus, to his strong doubts about the validity of Jewish *Wissenschaft* he added an even stronger rejection of modern Biblical studies. This negativism with respect to two comprehensive attempts at bringing about secure knowledge in two main fields of Jewish learning, Bible and Jewish History, facilitated his unmethodical way of handling ideas. He was no systematizer, he was an essayist — a first-rate one — and a political *ad hoc* pamphleteer — though one of enduring effectiveness. He selected, shuffled and put together concepts that suited his politics and were conducive to expressing the political message that he had for his contemporaries.

Zunz's historic achievement was that he opened the doors to the Jewish past. His philological studies of literature were designed to lead toward genuine history, rebuild the past as it really was and connect it to the Jewish presence, for Jewish literature offers the best access to Jewish history and most adequately reflects its spirit. Some of those who followed Zunz engaged in theologizing that history. Aḥad Ha-Am recognized this, intuitively so, and was moved by his dissent to reject the entire concept. But did he realize that he himself did not engage in genuine history either? To apply a modern term, does it not appear that Aḥad Ha-Am's writing and conceptualizations move straight into "political theology?"

The Simpleton's Prayer: Transformations of a Motif in Hebrew Literature

MARC SAPERSTEIN

THE SIMPLETON'S PRAYER, WHICH IS CRITICIZED by a representative of the religious establishment and then validated by a higher authority, is a recurrent theme in the literatures of many nations. It may be viewed from different perspectives: as a folkloristic motif,¹ as a religious doctrine proclaiming the value of simple sincerity in God's sight, or as an expression of a challenge to established norms that make knowledge and conformance with standardized procedures paramount for the service of the Almighty. Relatively little attention has been paid to the literary contexts in which this theme appears. Several well-known Hebrew tales built upon this motif have been lumped together, as if they were a single story with minor variations, but a careful reading reveals that each incarnation of the common motif is actually an independent literary unit, with an identity and meaning of its own.

The first story is from *Sefer Hasidim*, that unique compendium of the aspirations and superstitions of medieval German Pietism:

Whatever a person can do in the nature of a *mizvah*, he should do, and whatever he is incapable of doing, he should *think* of doing.

Once upon a time, there was a man who worked as a shepherd. He did not know how to pray. Every day he used to say, "Master of the universe, You know very well that if You had animals and gave them to me to watch, though I receive a fee for watching the animals of everyone else, I would watch Yours for nothing, because I love You." The man was a Jew. Once a great Jewish scholar came his way and found the shepherd praying in this manner. He said to him, "Fool, do not pray like that!"

The shepherd asked, "How should I pray?"

The scholar taught him the order of blessings, the reading of the *shema*, and the eighteen benedictions, on condition that he would never again say what he used to say.

After the scholar went away, the shepherd forgot all that he had been taught, so that he could not pray at all. He was afraid to say what he used to say, because the *zaddik* had forbidden him to do so.

One night, the scholar had a dream in which he was told, "If you do not go and tell him that he should say what he used to say before you came to him, great evil will befall you, for you have robbed Me of someone from the world to come." Immediately he went and asked the shepherd, "What are you praying?"

1. See, for example, Dov Noy, "Tefillat ha-Tamim Moridah Geshamim," *Mahanayim*, 51 (1960): 34-45, especially p. 36, n. 11.

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He answered, "Nothing, for I have forgotten what you taught me, and you commanded me not to say, 'If He had animals. . . .'"

The scholar replied, "This is what I dreamed: say what you used to say."

Here there was neither learning nor good deeds, but he intended to do good, and God considered it as if he had done something great, for "the Merciful One desires the heart." Therefore, a person should think good thoughts about the Holy One, blessed be He.²

The story is set in a doctrinal framework, but it may be analyzed independently, without reference to the moral drawn. The shepherd is presented as an uneducated man who does not know the words of the fixed liturgy. Infused with a love of God, he expresses this love through his own ritual, a liturgy that he himself created and utters every day. From the perspective of the scholar, the problem with the shepherd is not that he holds an anthropomorphic view of God, but rather that he fails to fulfil the *mizvah* of prayer. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with the shepherd's words, which express a willingness to serve without reward through a hypothetical situation familiar to him.

The scholar who is by no means portrayed as a man of arrogance, condescension, or cruelty, is disturbed because the shepherd says these words in place of the proper liturgy. He, therefore, does more than criticize; he acts constructively, teaching the illiterate shepherd all that is necessary for the fulfilment of the *mizvah*, an educational task presumably requiring patience and perseverance. He then leaves the scene, assuming that the shepherd is capable of fulfilling the commandment properly. Even the condition that he imposes is understandable. Once the shepherd learned the liturgy, he is obligated to make the effort necessary to pray with the proper words. If the option of returning to the familiar formula were to remain, the shepherd might be tempted to revert to his accustomed manner because it is easier. The scholar agrees, therefore, to teach him, only with the proviso that the shepherd's own liturgy be permanently abandoned.

The behavior of the scholar is reasonable and responsible. If the shepherd had, indeed, prayed regularly in the words that he had learned, the dream conveying divine displeasure would never have occurred. The scholar errs, not in his attempt to teach, but in his assumption that the effects of what he has taught would be permanent. He takes it for granted that, given a minimal education, everyone can achieve the same standard of religious observance. He does not respond to the man as he is: a shepherd unaccustomed to sustained intellectual effort and isolated from the reinforcement of other worshippers, incapable of persisting in the new discipline that he has been taught, yet sufficiently respectful of the scholar to observe scrupulously the prohibition imposed upon him.

2. *Sefer Hasidim*, ed. Wistinetzki (Frankfurt am Main, 1924), p. 6, translated by the author. For a discussion of parallel treatments of this theme in Christian and Moslem literature and related motifs in the aggadah, see Bernard Heller's "Gott Wünscht das Herz," *HUCA*, 4 (1927), especially pp. 368-79.

Therefore, the scholar unwittingly causes harm, directly to the shepherd and indirectly to God Himself, because the shepherd no longer prays at all. Fortunately, the damage can be undone.

It has been noted that the thrust of this story seems to conflict with the German Pietists' insistence that the standard text of the liturgy must be guarded against even the minutest change.³ Yet there is no necessary contradiction. The story never challenges the traditional liturgy. Nowhere is it implied that the shepherd's formulation is in any way preferable to the standardized prayer. It is said to be preferable only to nothing at all, which is certainly not an anti-establishment doctrine. The words of the shepherd are obviously inappropriate for a scholar or a *hasid*. They still do not fulfil the *mizvah* of prayer. But they are adequate for the shepherd, sufficient to make him eligible for the "world to come."

The second story is set against a totally different background: the return to Judaism of *conversos* who had grown up as Christians without any Jewish education.

It happened in the days of the Ari, of blessed memory. One of the *conversos*, who came from Portugal to the holy city of Safed in the upper Galilee, heard the rabbi of one of the holy congregations there give a sermon about the showbread that was offered in the sanctuary every Sabbath. Apparently, the rabbi sighed during his sermon and said in sorrow, "And now, because of our many sins, we have nothing designated for sacred use, which would enable the divine emanation to fall upon that which is not so designated."

The *converso*, who heard this, went home and, in the naivete of his heart, commanded his wife that no matter what the circumstances, she should prepare for him every Friday two loaves of bread [from flour] sifted thirteen times, that it should be kneaded in purity, given the very best treatment, and baked well in the home oven, for he wanted to bring it as an offering before the Lord's altar. "Perhaps God will consider us, and accept them, and eat this offering." His wife did just as he said. Every Friday he would bring the two loaves of bread before the altar, entreat God to accept them with good will and eat them, and pray that they be pleasing and enjoyable to Him. He would say things of this kind persistently, like a son who importunes his father. Then he would leave the loaves and go on his way.

The sexton used to come and take the two loaves of bread without investigating their source. He would eat and rejoice in them, as one does at harvest-time. At the hour for evening prayer, that God-fearing man [the *converso*] would run to the synagogue. Not finding the loaves there, he would rejoice exuberantly. He would then go and say to his wife, "All praise and thanks to God, for He has not despised the lowliness of the poor. He has already received the bread and eaten it hot. For His Name's sake, do not be negligent in making them; take great care . . ." He continued in this manner for a long time.

3. See Joseph Dan, *Ha-Sippur ha-Ivri Biyemei ha-Beinayim*, p. 180. Dan's suggestion that the story was included in *Sefer Hasidim* by editors who did not understand its "antinomian conclusions" is not warranted by our analysis.

It happened one Friday that the rabbi whose sermon had led the man to bring the loaves was standing in the synagogue on the *bimah*, practicing the sermon that he was to give on the following day. The *converso* came with the loaves, approached the altar as usual, and began to utter his supplications in the accustomed manner. So deeply was he engrossed in exuberant joy as he brought his gift that he did not notice the rabbi standing on the *bimah*. The rabbi grew silent; he saw and heard everything that the man did. He then became extremely angry, called him over and rebuked him, saying, "You fool! Does *our* God eat and drink? Obviously the sexton is taking the bread, and you think that it is God who takes it. It is a great sin to attribute any corporeality to God, who has no likeness of a body and is incorporeal." He continued to berate the man until the sexton came, in his accustomed manner, to take the loaves. When the rabbi saw him, he called out, "Thank this man for the two loaves that you came to take; he is the one who has brought them every Friday to the synagogue." The sexton thanked him, without embarrassment.

When the man heard this, he began to weep. He besought the rabbi to forgive him for having misunderstood the sermon. He had thought that he was performing a *mizvah*, whereas, according to the rabbi, he was actually transgressing. While this was happening, a special emissary from the Ari came to the rabbi and said to him in the name of that godly sage, "Go home, and set your household in order, for tomorrow, at the time you intended to deliver your sermon, you will die! The proclamation has already been made about this."

The rabbi was aghast at this dire message. He went to the Ari to inquire what was his sin. The Ari replied, "I have heard that it is because you have spoiled the pleasure which was God's. For from the day of the destruction, He had no pleasure comparable to that when this *converso*, in the naivete of his heart, would bring two loaves of bread and offer them before His altar." The rabbi went and set his household affairs in order. On the Sabbath day, at the time when he was to have begun preaching, he passed into eternity.⁴

Structurally, this story is similar to the one found in *Sefer Hasidim*. The *converso* corresponds to the shepherd, the rabbi to the scholar. The Ari plays a role analogous to the dream, as a channel of divine communication. While one purpose of the story is to tell of Rabbi Luria's miraculous knowledge, from a literary point of view there would be no essential difference if he were replaced by a voice from heaven. Yet, despite the similarities of structure and theme, this is a very different story from the first; it is more complex, more disturbing, more suffused with pathos.

The naive misunderstanding of the sermon⁵ makes the relationship between rabbi and *converso* significantly more intricate than that between the scholar and the shepherd of *Sefer Hasidim*, for the rabbi is indirectly

4. *Mishnat Hakhhamim*, quoted in Simḥa Asaf, "Anusei Sefarad u-Portugal be-Sifrut ha-Teshuvot," *Zion*, 5 (1933): 25-26, translated by the author; cf. M.J. Bin Gurion, *Mimekor Yisrael: Classical Jewish Folktales* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1976), II, pp. 524-26. The showbread discussed in the sermon is mentioned several times in the Pentateuch; see especially Leviticus 24:5-9. The *converso* confuses this with the "two loaves" that were to be offered in relation to the holiday of Shavuot (Leviticus 23.17). The thirteen siftings apply to neither the showbread nor the two loaves, but to the *omer*; see *Mishnah Menahot* 6.7.

5. The misunderstanding leading to comic results and the "literal fool" are well-known folkloristic motifs. If the shepherd in *Sefer Hasidim* had heard the scholar speak about the "flocks of the Lord" and drawn his own conclusions, there would have been a parallel.

responsible for the act that he later seeks to halt. Having been raised as a Christian in Portugal, the *converso* takes the rabbi's discussion of the showbread literally. In the belief that God actually eats the bread, he resolves to do something about the cessation of the sacrificial offerings by fulfilling the Biblical injunction himself. This, of course, perverts the rabbi's intention. But the "misunderstanding" turns out to be correct on a higher level, for the Ari describes the *converso*'s oblation as bringing God greater pleasure than any He has experienced since the suspension of the Temple cult.

The cast of characters is expanded by the addition of two minor personalities, the *converso*'s wife and the sexton; both are needed for the plot, but they are little more than props. In contrast, the *converso* and the rabbi emerge from these few lines as believable and real. At issue is not a sin of omission, as in the case of the shepherd, but a sin of commission: a grossly anthropomorphic view of God, leading to actions that could be interpreted as idolatrous. From the perspective of the religious establishment, what the *converso* does is far more opprobrious than the shepherd's "prayer." And, yet, even before the final vindication, we see that he is depicted with approval. He is said to be "God-fearing," he acts without duplicity or ulterior motive and, in the naivete or innocence of his heart, he experiences "exuberant joy" in his service. The dissonance between the scandalous act and the narrator's sympathy for the purity of the *converso*'s intention and inner religious state creates a powerful tension at the heart of the story.

The rabbi is actually quite different from his analogue in *Sefer Hasidim*. It is not that he is a bad man. He feels deeply the imperfections of Jewish life in exile, even while living in the land of Israel, and he is conscientious about preparing his sermon. But he acts in a manner that is totally destructive. Unlike the scholar, he does not offer to teach the ignorant man. He insults him, humiliates him, lectures at him in anger. He even alludes disparagingly to the *converso*'s Christian background as the cause of his error — "our God does not eat and drink" — despite a long tradition prohibiting this type of affront. Nevertheless, the severity of the ending comes as something of a shock. Herein lies the greatest difference between the two stories. Instead of a warning with instructions to rectify the wrong that he has done, the rabbi hears that his fate has been sealed inexorably, as a punishment for his action. This follows from the inner logic of the story. What the rabbi has done cannot be undone. The shepherd can return to his original profession of love for God, but once the *converso* has learned that the sexton has been taking his loaves, he can never return to his innocent devotion. The rabbi has irrevocably destroyed something precious to God, and his punishment for this fatal error is as ineluctable as the denouement of a Greek tragedy.⁶

6. Another underlying theme of this story may be its hostility toward the philosophical approach to Judaism. The rabbi, in emphasizing the absolute incorporeality of God and the

The third variation on the theme is probably the best known:

A certain villager used to pray on the Days of Awe in the House of Prayer of the Baal Shem Tov. He had a son whose wit was dull and who could not read even the letters in the prayer book, much less recite a holy word. His father never brought him along to the city, because the boy was completely ignorant. But when the boy became Bar Mizvah, his father took him with him to the city on Yom Kippur, so as to be able to watch him and keep him from eating out of simple ignorance on the holy fast day.

Now the boy had a little flute on which he used to play all the time when he sat in the field tending his flock. He took the flute with him from home and put it in his coat, and his father did not know about it. The boy sat in the House of Prayer all Yom Kippur without praying, because he did not know how. During the *Musaf* Prayer he said to his father, "Father, I want to play my flute." His father became terrified, and spoke sharply to the boy. The boy had to restrain himself.

During the Afternoon Prayer the boy repeated again, "Father, let me play on my flute." Again the father spoke sharply to his son, and warned him not to dare do any such thing. But he could not take the flute away from his son, because of the prohibition against unnecessary handling (*mukzeh*) on Yom Kippur.

After the Afternoon Prayer, the boy said again, "Please let me play on my flute." Seeing that the boy wanted so much to play on his flute, his father said to him: "Where is the flute?" The child pointed to the pocket of his coat. The father took the child's pocket and held it in his hand, to keep the boy from taking out the flute and playing on it. Holding the pocket with the flute in this way, the man stood and prayed the Closing Prayer. In the middle of the prayer, the boy forced the flute out of his pocket and blew a blast so loud that all who heard it were taken aback. When the Baal Shem Tov (who was the Reader) heard the sound, he shortened his prayer.

After the prayer the Baal Shem Tov said, "With the sound of his flute this child lifted up all the prayers and eased my burden. For this child does not know anything, but, by dint of his seeing and hearing the prayer of Israel all of this holy day, the prayer's holy spark kindled an actual fire in him. One who knows how can clothe that sacred flame with the words of prayer before God. But this one knew nothing, and he could find no means of quenching his thirst except by blowing upon the whistle. When his father prevented him, the flame of his longing burned ever more strongly, until it nearly consumed his soul. The power of this craving impelled him to blow from the true depth of his heart, without any constraint, purely for God. 'The Merciful One desires the heart,' and the pure breath of the boy's lips was very acceptable to Him. In this way, he lifted all our prayers."⁷

sin of attributing any physical properties to Him, articulates a doctrine central to the Jewish philosophers. Maimonides, who insisted that one who prays to a God envisioned corporeally, no matter how well-intentioned he may be, is guilty of idolatry, worshipping not the true God but a creation of the imagination, would certainly not have been pleased with this story. In contrast, the narrator represents a position similar to that of R. Joseph Yabetz, who maintained that a simple Jewish woman who conceives of God as corporeal but believes in Him, loves Him, and keeps His commandments, is far superior to the philosopher with all his lofty conceptions (*Or ha-Hayyim*, p. 32b). This view is ultimately ratified by the Ari.

7. *Emunat Zaddikim* (Tel Aviv, 1965), p. 12, translated in *Days of Awe* by S.Y. Agnon, (New York, 1965), pp. 268-70; the final paragraph has been modified by the author in accordance with the Hebrew text. This story should not be confused with the technical teachings of the Hasidim concerning prayer, on which see Louis Jacobs, *Hasidic Prayer* (New York, 1973), and especially pp. 34-35.

The boy is obviously paralled to the shepherd and the *converso* in the preceding stories. His intellectual limitations are emphasized not only in his inability to master the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, but, also, in the fact that, though he is thirteen, constant supervision is required to keep him from eating on the Day of Atonement. The transformation of the itinerant scholar and the rabbi-preacher into the father of the simpleton adds a new twist to the story. He represents, not the established leadership, but the ingrained sensibilities of the Jewish community. More important, it is not the insensitivity of an outsider, but the anguished concern of a loving parent that is examined.

The reader may infer the father's patient attempts to teach his son the rudimentary Hebrew necessary for public worship, and his disappointment at the futility of these efforts; he may sense how much it would have meant to the father to be able to share the experience of Yom Kippur in the Baal Shem Tov's synagogue, and empathize with the sad loneliness of having to leave the child behind "because he was completely ignorant." That year, it would undoubtedly have been easier for the father to have left his son at home. He risks embarrassment and distraction for the boy's sake, in order to keep him from sinning by eating on the great fast. Presumably, the boy could have taken the whistle and blown it before his father knew what was happening, but he respectfully asks permission, thereby creating a conflict that intensifies as the closing hour draws near. With the son's ever more urgent pleading, the father's response escalates, from surprised dismay, to exasperated anger, to desperate action. In order to guard his son from what he believes would be a grave sin, he himself risks transgressing, by holding the boy's pocket closed over the forbidden flute.

When the shrill tone pierces the prayers of the faithful, the tension concealed in the conflict between father and son becomes overt. The reaction of the worshippers is not described in detail; their amazement is noted and their hostility can be assumed. The focus of tension lies in the awaited reaction of the Baal Shem Tov, who acts in an unusual manner, shortening the climactic prayers of the concluding service. Like the divine communication through the dream and like the Ari, the Baal Shem Tov represents the ultimate source of authority. But his function is different: it is neither to reprimand and instruct nor to proclaim punishment, but, rather, to justify and explain. There is little, if any, criticism of the father. We have, instead, an elucidation of what has happened, based on a knowledge that penetrates through external appearances to the very core.

As in the case of the shepherd's tale, the value of simple and sincere spontaneity in one unable to learn the words of the fixed liturgy is emphasized. But two new elements make this a more radical story than the other one. First, the action validated by the Baal Shem Tov involves an infringement of the halakhic prohibition against holding and sounding a musical instrument on Yom Kippur. And, second, here there is an explicit

comparison between the idiosyncratic expression of the simpleton and the normative prayer of the ordinary Jew, with the normative prayer found wanting. The boy's outburst is superior to the traditional worship of the others and, in seeking to frustrate his son, the father is inadvertently harming the entire congregation. All three stories make the point that the fire of devotion in the ignorant makes their chosen means of expression acceptable and pleasing to God. Here, alone, we find the concomitant teaching: that without the fire of devotion, the words of the fixed liturgy may be far less acceptable than the notes of a flute.

The hasidic story points toward a parallel in a classic of modern Hebrew literature, "Faivke's Judgment Day," by Isaac Dov Berkowitz. Here, too, a Jew from an outlying village brings his son to the city to pray in the synagogue on Yom Kippur; here, too, the boy is unable to participate in the service because of his complete lack of knowledge. Both father and son are subjected to humiliation and torment by the local Jews. Matis, the father, is able to shrug it off; Faivke, bewildered, becomes angry and defiant. The climactic moment comes in the afternoon:

Soon the prayers began again. After a thunderous bang on the table, the silent prayer began. Afterwards the young cantor chanted away with a now faltering voice and waning strength. It seemed as if the whole thing had become burdensome; he was now merely completing his obligations and putting the interests of the majority before his own. For a moment Matis the smith, standing near the window, forgot where he was; he forgot about the open prayer book, and stared out at the tops of the trees aglow in the setting sun. Then something happened that startled the worshippers. Matis dropped his head on to the windowsill, hid his face in the prayer book, and wept bitterly. Everyone turned towards him. Some burst out laughing. The words that the cantor had just chanted should, in no way, have evoked tears. Why should anyone weep at the words "Michael praises on the right" in the late afternoon service? Laughing and joking, several young boys and some men came up to Matis. The innkeeper's son-in-law tugged at his *tallit*.

"Mister, you made a mistake, no one cries at this place!"

Matis controlled his tears and did not reply: he did not even acknowledge the man's presence. The red-headed, bird-faced lad with the freckles also leaped into the fray and pulled at Matis' *tallit*:

"Mister," we don't cry here!"

Faivke [the son of the Smith] looked in confusion first at his father and then at the crowd. He leaped up impetuously and glued his piercing, black eyes on the red-head's face:

"You, you . . . may wolves devour you!"

Boisterous laughter exploded in the room and in the confusion that followed someone yelled out, "Brat! In a holy place?" One of the worshippers responded with, "Ha, ha, the lad from Starodubov must be a full-fledged *goy*."

Later, on the way home, after a fight with his tormentors that leaves him battered, Faivke confronts his father in anguished confusion:

Faivke was silent and continued staring at his father with feverish eyes. Then he blurted out, "What about you . . . what happened to you? . . . Why did you cry? Tell me, why did you cry there?"

"I didn't really cry, you silly boy," said Matis. "I didn't cry at all. It's only that today is Yom Kippur . . . and mother is at home all alone . . . waiting for us. . . . Get up, Faivke, let's go home! Mother'll put a bandage on your head."

"No!" Faivke persisted, "tell me, why did you cry? Why did you cry, when they were all laughing? You shouldn't cry when they laugh. You cried and they laughed . . . we ought to knock their teeth out, slap their faces, bite them, bite them . . . bite them all. May wolves devour them . . .!"⁸

While Matis the smith is not depicted as an ignorant man incapable of reading the prayerbook, his spontaneous sobs, interrupting the worship toward the end of Yom Kippur, are obviously analogous to the boy's blast on his flute. Matis' expression of genuine religious sentiment is all the more poignant in its stark contrast with the mechanical performance of the cantor and the irreverent behavior of the other worshippers, who sanctimoniously invoke the holiness of the time and the place while showing themselves oblivious to the holy.⁹ One waits for a vindication of Matis, if not before the derisive local worshippers, then at least before his bewildered son.

But there is no voice from heaven, no messenger from the Ari, no explanation from the Baal Shem Tov. No higher authority intercedes to set things right by vindicating the sobs of the blacksmith. Matis continues to appear embarrassed and foolish. And Faivke, his son, who had risen to his father's defense, ultimately vents his confusion against the man who sobbed while the others laughed. Unable to comprehend either the traditional society, with its perversion of religion, or a father too deeply rooted in this society to stand up for himself, Faivke tries to fight back and is destroyed, a victim not only of Jews without compassion, but of a Judgment Day without a Judge. It is the anticipation of divine intervention, produced by the literary background, that makes God's silence appear as tacit approval of the hypocritical and heartless Jewish townsmen. The framework in which the ultimate Power intercedes on behalf of the powerless is forever shattered.

It has been argued that modern Hebrew literature can be defined by its secular stance, entailing a revolutionary repudiation of the traditional

8. "Faivke's Judgment Day," translated by Avraham Holtz in *Isaac Dov Berkowitz: Voice of the Uprooted* (London, 1973), pp. 187-88, 191. The nature of this passage as a transformation of the motif we have been discussing has been pointed out in a fine study of this story by Gershon Shaked, *Al Arba'ah Sippurim* (Jerusalem, 1963), p. 21.

9. There is trenchant irony in the narrator's question, "Why should anyone weep at the words 'Michael praises on the right' in the late afternoon service?" The *piyut* continues, "Gabriel acclaims on the left saying, 'There is none like God in Heaven! Who is like Thy people Israel on earth?'" The unworthiness of the Jews in this synagogue and the consequent emptiness of these words might, indeed, move a sensitive soul to tears.

10. See, for example, Baruch Kurzweil, *Sifruteinu ha-Hadashah: Hemshekh o Mahapekhah?* (Jerusalem, 1958), p.16 and *passim*.

world-view that is based on faith in the reality of God and the inherent sanctity of all experience.¹⁰ This criterion is overly simplistic, failing to account either for secular components of medieval literature or for the religious dimensions of certain modern writings, as exemplified in the tales that have been analysed here. It would be misleading to lump together the first three stories in contrast with the last. When put in sequence, the first three show an increasing complexity and differing religious views that lead up to the treatment in the modern version.

The Invisible Carmel

ZELDA

When I die
 passing to another nature
 the invisible Carmel —
 which is all mine,
 the core of happiness,
 whose pine needles, pine cones, flowers and clouds
 are engraved in my flesh —
 will separate from the visible Carmel
 with the avenues of pines that go down to the sea.

Does the pleasure of red sunset
 come from the kernel of death in me?
 And the pleasure of balm
 and the moment of mist over water
 and the moment of return
 to the stern look of Jerusalem's sky
 to the Almighty above all —
 is this from the kernel of death?

(Translated from the Hebrew by Tova Weizman)

The Yiddish Word Persists

MEYER BASS

THE YIDDISH "WORD" PENETRATED ALMOST every aspect of American intellectual life when the ghetto walls were broken and post-immigrant American Jewish generations could become an integral part of the total American cultural mainstream. Free of the restraints of *shtetl* life, the censorship of oppressive governments, blatant anti-Semitism and the pogrom atmosphere of Eastern Europe, the Jew in America produced a vibrant, practical communication system. Making use of Yiddish (already a mature language by the 20th century) and gradually adapting English in the American Jewish style, Jews entered into a new phase of expression of the Yiddish "word." With the development of native born, Americanized Jews, educated generations of Jewish creative people produced a *Yiddishkeit* of their own, which has been manifested in prose, poetry, theatre, press and the other media. For a few decades, the process continued with some degree of simultaneity in two languages. Yiddish spoke to those of earlier generations while Anglo-Jewish expression reached out to the growing generations of native American Jews.

In more recent years, two outstanding American Jewish writers have received the Nobel Award for literature. Saul Bellow was recognized as a dean among American writers for his perceptive insights into the generational process, the internal struggles of personalities, and the adaptations of the old cultural norms to the new society — a coherent commentary in most of his outstanding work. His long line of association with the Yiddish cultural strands of the past are a distinct reference point in his creativity. On the other hand, Isaac Bashevis Singer still writes in Yiddish but his works are translated into English and widely read by American intellectuals, particularly by Jewish readers who respond warmly to his concrete description of life in Poland or the pre-Nazi era and enjoy his sophisticated subtle treatment of the temptations of life and the mystical aspects of the human equation. In the space of a single decade, Bellow in English and Singer in Yiddish received the Nobel Award, indicating thereby a world-wide appreciation for their literary contributions in the totality of the American Jewish cultural stream.

Bellow expressed a consciousness of his inheritance of the wealth of literature from the past when, in *Chicago Review* (1972), he acknowledged that his literary conceptualization and imagery "comes from the fact that in a most susceptible time of my life I was wholly Jewish. That's a gift, a

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piece of good fortune with which one doesn't quarrel."

Perhaps the award to Singer closed an invisible gap, bringing the writers of this era into closer proximity with the traditions of Yehuda Leib Peretz, Mendele Mocher Sefhorim, and Sholem Aleichem. Certainly it marked a significant milestone for Yiddish *per se*, but it also clarified the universal quality of the Yiddish "word" as an influential cultural force fully impacted within the fabric of American culture. It clearly said that "the Yiddish word exists" and its distinguished creative products have a well-deserved place in world literature.

It is clearly evident that the Yiddish "word" has reached a sophisticated level of literary maturity. Yiddish prose today is excellent, poetry is exquisite, the Yiddish press is exemplary, and even Yiddish language study and research on the university level has earned its academic spurs. A doctorate in Yiddish studies from the Columbia University Weinreich Center or the Jewish Teachers Seminary — Herzliah (now associated with Touro College) certainly has shown that academic potentialities are real and alive.

As early as the 1940s, the establishment of the YIVO Jewish Research Council on the American scene introduced a new element for the Yiddish "word" to survive in academia among linguists, philologists, and researchers who were attracted to it. Later, the Weinreich Center at Columbia University and the Yiddish Studies program at Queens College were able to move quite further ahead with Yiddish in the academic areas.

Languages live, however, because of their popular appeal. Traditionally, every language with durability recognized the centrality of poetry as the major domain for the "word." The poet transmits his essence by continuing the creative chain, bringing out his message in its most exquisite form. The Yiddish poet embraced this concept, treasured the "tintinnabulation of the word" and authenticated its artistic purity and beauty of expression. This tradition has deep Jewish roots going back to Biblical sources (Song of Songs, Psalms, Esther, Ruth, Job, Lamentations, Song of Miriam), later extended by the poets of the Jewish Golden Age in Spain (where Arabic was the carrier of the Jewish poetic message). Theatre and music brought poetry to a wider periphery and made its impact universal in scope.

In the same way, Yiddish theatre has been a major vehicle for the Yiddish "word," from the early days of *Kleyn Kunst* to the full scale dramatic art of modern times. In the earlier days there were the *Purimspieler* and, in the late 19th century, the *Broder Zinger* in Eastern Europe laid a foundation for the work of Goldfadn. During the period of mass migration, his theatre gained stature and loyal supporters in this country, where illustrious compatriots emerged as a strong force, widely felt not only in Europe and New York but throughout the two American continents. Its personalities became legendary heroes in the American Jewish community.

In current times, it is almost superfluous to refer to the high preponderance of Jews in the ranks of comedians, song writers, musicians, and actors in musical theatre, cinema, television and radio.

The enthusiasm for Yiddish theatre still exists on another level. The Hebrew Actors Union, the official body of professional Yiddish actors, recently launched a serious effort to establish a well-supported, properly endowed National Yiddish Theatre as a permanent central base for continuing Yiddish theatre on the American scene. Community theatre in Yiddish remains alive, and performances by local groups are noted from time to time in Jewish Community Centers, among the noteworthy ones being Milwaukee and Cleveland. On the professional level, there were three well received Yiddish productions in New York City in 1978-1979. To some extent, the professional theatre travels to various communities and still attracts excellent audiences, including a wide cross-section of age groupings.

Another encouraging phenomenon is the renewed interest in Yiddish films. For several years there have been Yiddish Film Festivals in New York City through the joint efforts of the 92nd St. YM-YWHA, Workmen's Circle, American Jewish Congress, Society for the Advancement of Judaism, and other established organizations and agencies. The Jewish Media Service (American Jewish Historical Society) has revived and renovated the film *Mirele Ephros*, which was shown in 1976 at the General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds in Philadelphia and later in New York City at the Whitney Museum in 1977. More significantly, the Jewish Media Service has undertaken an extensive project to renovate some thirty-five Yiddish masterpieces done in cinema in the United States and elsewhere. Also, the National Jewish Welfare Board has available a program catalogue of rental films which include a wide range and variety of useful movies starring the best of Yiddish theatre.

In many other ways, the interest in the Yiddish "word" is still alive and well. The spread of American Jewish writing in English, the infusion of Yiddish-in-translation into the American fabric, and the transplantation of Yiddish values from their original cultural frameworks into the American Jewish cultural mix has prospered. In the open society, there still remains today a wide spectrum of Yiddish programming in synagogues and temples, in the YM-YWHAs and the Jewish Community Centers, in Yiddish oriented organizations such as Workmen's Circle or Labor Zionist Alliance, and in numerous *landsmanshaften* throughout the major areas of Jewish population concentration.

As a public cultural medium, Yiddish may have a limited future, but a recent survey among American cities shows a persistent intensity of Yiddish cultural activities: classes, seminars, community-wide projects, film festivals, symposia, literary evenings, and study groups.

A Yiddish Book Fair was held at the Washington JCC in 1977. A

major festival around the theme of *The Yarid* was held there in 1975 and the Wilmington JCC reported a broad-based celebration of *The Shtetl* in 1977. Thus, it is fair to note that the survival process has a distinct momentum both in the communities and in the universities, in the Jewish Community Centers and in the synagogues and temples.

The most conspicuous example of the vitality of the Yiddish "word" is artistically illustrated in the bright-light impact of the incredible "Fiddler on the Roof." Tevye has not only become a household word, but he has provided an international cultural bridge to many nations ranging from Japan to Israel itself. Sholem Aleichem, belatedly, alas, found a ready market on the stage, on the screen, in community drama groups, in the resident camps, in the university drama workshops, on television, radio, recordings, cassettes, and in every nook and cranny where "Fiddler's" music can come forth. In fact, "Fiddler on the Roof" has no ethnic bounds or limitations. It has gained acceptance everywhere. Here is a definite instance exemplifying the acclimatizing of the Yiddish "word" within the complexities of the American scene as a recognized contribution to world culture as such.

Among the gratifying characteristics of the current vitality of the Yiddish "word" is its appeal to new generations. Jewish young people in Yiddish classes, in workshops about Yiddish, at artistic performances, and at Yiddish film revivals, community festivals, and special projects — all contribute to the impression that Yiddish has attracted them in significant numbers. In this context, it should be noted that over 10% of the participants in the World Conference in Israel on Yiddish and Yiddish Culture in 1976 came from the younger elements. They were young activists for the Yiddish "word" and their attitude was aggressive, affirmative, urgent, and irresistibly contagious. Their desire to perpetuate the Yiddish "word" was, indeed, a high point of the conference.

There is, it is true, another side to this rosy picture. In *World of Our Fathers* (1976), Irving Howe wonders how much longer the traditional association with Yiddish can endure. How long can the Yiddish heritage and inspiration serve the needs of the American Jewish writer of tomorrow, he asks, and he offers the view that American Jewish fiction has "probably moved past its high point." Truly clear, the new generation can no longer draw from the immigrant experience, but it is hard to accept the note that the Jewish writer must inevitably find his resources depleted and thin, since his imagination has turned toward America. Irving Howe's opus concentrates on the immigrant culture of the New York East Side, taking little note of the broader outreach of *Yiddishkeit* throughout the New York region and beyond, the multiplicity of newspapers and publications, the activity in synagogues, temples, YMHAs, summer camps, Jewish Community Centers, Jewish Settlement Houses, organizations such as the Labor Zionist Alliance, and the multitude of Yiddish speaking *landsman-shaften* that have already been referred to. In the same vein, the Jewish

settlements in Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, St. Louis, Chicago, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Boston, Minneapolis (not to overlook Toronto, Winnipeg and Montreal in Canada) receive no significant notice, despite the impact of the Galveston Plan, the *Am Olam* movement, or the Jewish farmers who are trained and established by the Jewish Agricultural Society.

The objective linguistic fact is fully recognized and appreciated. Yiddish is a "weak" language, comparable in linguistic status to Irish, for example, but still productive and useful in the creative sense, even though no longer strong enough to withstand the competitive pressures of the major languages in the "host" countries.

What is more, Yiddish language maintenance has suffered a tragic set-back as a result of the diminution in numerical strength (not to mention cultural and creative potency) following the European Holocaust and its aftermath. But despite the destruction of six million Jews (largely Yiddish speaking), the *pintele Yid* survives and his "word" is still vibrant and even resonant in some sixteen nations where Jews reside. This includes, of course, the State of Israel where the "Yiddish word" appears to have found a new lease on life (now that the *Kultur-Kampf* has ended between Hebrew and Yiddish). Some may feel that this is only a nostalgic identity which can be expected to fade. Yet, Israel now fosters Yiddish as an elective in the high schools, conducts a large network of classes for Yiddish-speaking citizens, plans to create a Yiddish theatre workshop connected with Habimah and, in general, shows increasing signs of support from the Ministry of Education and Culture.

At the World Conference in Israel in 1976, a resolution, endorsed by Israeli intellectual and political leadership, recognized Yiddish as a national language within the amalgam of cultural, creative, and artistic strains existing side-by-side on the contemporary Israeli scene. This concept recognizes the Yiddish "word" as a living entity in the life style of Israel. *Di Goldene Kayt*, edited by Avrom Sutzkever (one of Israel's major Yiddish poets), is undoubtedly one of the outstanding literary journals of the current era, comparable to the best in any major language. This approach looks upon Yiddish as a source of continuing enrichment of Jewish cultural life in Israel through its folk-lore, its theatre, music, poetry, and its wealth of tradition as a literature over some ten centuries on the European continent.

Hebrew Literature in America

TINA LEVITAN

The Early Days

THE PURITANS OF NEW ENGLAND, WHO LARGE-ly established the character of America as it was to be, based their religion, their laws and their daily life on the Bible. In 1639, at the very beginning of higher education in the New World, they added Hebrew, the language of the Bible, as an essential course to the curriculum of Harvard College. Many generations of students there devoted one day a week, for three years, to studying it.

During the first few decades after the founding of Harvard, no course of study figured more largely than did Hebrew. Most of the students were preparing for the ministry, and it was necessary that they be able to read the Bible in its original language. In addition to the texts in grammar and syntax, the Hebrew Scriptures were the principal study material used.

The Bible was more to the Puritans than a divinely inspired document; it was the alpha and omega of knowledge and wisdom, the guide in personal habits and social relations, the inspirational force in a just government. The Prophets were more than mere names; they were household words. Respect for the "divine authority of the Sabbath," references to Boston as the "Jerusalem of this land" or to New England as the "New English Canaan," names of towns like Salem, Sharon and Bethlehem, names of persons like Israel and Samuel, Joshua and Ezekiel, all attest to a love for the Bible which was fostered by temporal and spiritual rulers, by schools and colleges. Governor William Bradford of Plymouth studied Hebrew because he would see with his own eyes "something of that most ancient language and holy tongue in which . . . God and angels spoke to holy patriarchs of old time . . ."

Following the Harvard pattern, other colleges, all established before 1760, such as Yale, William and Mary, the College of New Jersey (later Princeton), King's College (later Columbia), the Academy and College of Philadelphia (eventually the University of Pennsylvania), Brown and Dartmouth, taught the Hebrew language from their inception and have continued teaching it to this very day. Colonial America even toyed with the idea of adopting Hebrew as a national language. At the close of the American Revolution, certain members of Congress proposed that the use of the English language be formally prohibited in the United States

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and that Hebrew be substituted for it.

But the enormous interest in Hebrew in colonial America had only a meager influence on the production of literature in Hebrew, both on the part of Jews and other segments of the population. The Jews were few in number and relatively unlearned in Hebrew. They recited their prayers in Hebrew in the synagogues, but all that was demanded was the ability to read the Prayer Book by rote and to translate a little of the Pentateuch. The printing of Isaac Pinto's English translation of the Prayer Book in New York in 1761, and again in 1766, indicates the extent to which many Jews resorted to the vernacular in order to understand the prayers.

At a time when Moses Hayyim Luzzato (1707-1746), the Italian Cabbalist and poet, was invigorating Hebrew letters with remarkable plays and idyllic poems, anonymous Hebrew poets in America perpetuated only documentary curiosities which survived in manuscript or in print or even in stone — such as the unpublished nomenclator of Judah Monis (a converted Jew who taught Hebrew at Harvard in 1735),¹ which is still preserved in the Library of Harvard College, or tombstone inscriptions, such as the rhymed epitaph on the grave of Samuel Zanvill Levy of New York City, or the elegy to Walter J. Judah, who died in 1798 at the age of twenty. The latter work, in rhythmic, partially rhymed prose, extols the healing virtues of the deceased Judah, who was a medical student and contracted yellow fever in his ministrations to the stricken Jewish community of New York. The anonymous writer even coined a Hebrew word equivalent to yellow fever — *Eshta Zehubta* — a rare occurrence of a neologism on a tombstone.

Hebrew language and literature were also kept alive through publications of the Bible. One edition, initiated by Jonathan Horowitz of Philadelphia and continued by Thomas Bobson, appeared in 1814, and a Hebrew-English edition of the Pentateuch was put out by Isaac Leeser in 1845.

Despite the rather large number of Jewish printers in New York City in the late 1840s, only prayer books, a few Hebrew grammars, and several volumes of polemics and Hebrew discourses were published before 1860. Among these were Mordecai Manuel Noah's translation of the Apocryphal Book of *Yashar* and Raphall's post-Biblical *History of the Jews*. The meager products of the New York presses beyond these publications and the first American edition of the *Haggadah*, which appeared in 1837, are evidence of the marked lack of Hebrew scholarship among Jews. Economic pressures drove Americans of all creeds to concentrate on material development rather than on cultural refinements.

1. A nomenclator is a listing of words. This one was put out by Judah Monis, a converted Jew, who was instructor of Hebrew at Harvard College from 1722 to 1760. The first Hebrew grammar published in this country was written by him in 1735. (For more on Monis see Arthur A. Chiel, "Judah Monis, The Harvard Convert," JUDAISM [Spring 1974].)

East European Influences

The year 1860 is an important date in the history of Hebrew literature in America: the first original Hebrew work to be published here appeared in that year in New York City. It was a commentary on the *Sayings of the Fathers* and it was entitled *Sefer Abnei Yehoshua* (Book of the Stones of Joshua), and included the original text as well. In form, in content and even in title, the book conformed to medieval miscellanies of homiletics. The author, Joshua Falk, wavers between optimism and despair. He is aware of the receptivity of Jews to learning, but he realistically recognizes that the environment of the New World is non-spiritual and non-intellectual in the deepest sense.

With the coming of large numbers of East European Jews to America, beginning in the 1870s, the influence of European Hebrew writing began to be felt. A small group of enthusiasts who wanted to spread Hebrew culture made efforts to establish a press, and in a period of less than thirty years, twenty Hebrew journals appeared, though most of them were short-lived, mainly because there was only a small potential readership. The number of Jews really fluent in Hebrew was still limited and most of the subscribers to these periodicals and the readers of Hebrew books were teachers in Hebrew schools.

The first independent Hebrew periodical in this country, *Ha-Zofeh be-Eretz ha-Hadashah* (The New World Scout), appeared in New York from 1871 to 1872, under the editorship of Zvi Hirsch Bernstein. It followed the style and tone of contemporary East European journals and, to a certain extent, the Anglo-Jewish press in America which had much earlier beginnings in 1823. Other major Hebrew periodicals during that period: *Ner Ma'aravi* (Western Light), which existed from 1895 to 1897, and *Ha-Pisgah* (The Peak), which started in 1889 and continued under another name, *Ha-Tehiyyah* (The Revival), until 1899, were of high literary and journalistic standards and aroused hopes for a Hebrew renaissance in America. In its first issue, *Ner Ma'aravi* published a poem expressing an ardent longing for the development of Hebrew learning and literature. *Ha-Pisgah*, edited by Zeev Wolf Schorr, an ardent lover of Zion, firmly tried to stimulate interest in Hebrew culture and enlisted writers of the caliber of Saul Tchernichovsky, who would eventually be a towering figure in the modern Hebrew renaissance, to contribute to its literary columns.

Most of the periodicals of the early twentieth century like *Ha-Yom* (The Day), which existed from 1909 to 1913 and *Ha-Le'Om* (The Nation), which started in 1901 and continued until 1908, were close in style and character to their predecessors. Not until the appearance of *Ha-Toren* (The Mast) as a monthly, from June 1913 to December 1915, and as a weekly from 1916 to 1921, did a real literary organ appear on the North

American scene. But even *Ha-Toren* did not rise to its full stature before the end of World War I, for there were not many good Hebrew writers, readers were still few, and libraries of Hebraica and Judaica were meager and, with few exceptions, insignificant.

It is surprising that Hebrew writers had the leisure to write at all. "Their lot," wrote an observer in 1887, "was like the majority of Hebrew writers from time immemorial; some of them were teachers, some were store attendants, some peddlers, some merchants. But the majority were merely poor." Since Hebrew writing was not lucrative, they had to derive their livelihood from other sources and pursue their literary activities in their spare time.

However, Ephraim Deinard, a book collector and bibliographer, was wrong when, in 1888, the year of his arrival in America, he stated that there were no Hebrew writers and no libraries of Hebrew books at all. The great libraries of Harvard and Yale, to mention only two, had Hebrew books. Throughout the land, there were scattered a few Hebrew writers like Isaac Goldstein, a merchant-author, who, in 1857, had written a Hebrew essay dedicated to a synagogue in Louisville, Kentucky. Goldstein, with modest talent but with much good-will, was ecstatic over *Beis Yisroel* and Abraham Lincoln. Both blended in perfectly with his American-Jewish background.

Heading the list of American Hebrew writers of East European origin who were intensely patriotic about their new country was Judah David Eisenstein (1856-1956). A Russian Jewish scholar who had come to New York in 1872, he had, in 1891, translated into Hebrew the two basic charters of liberty in America: the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. Eisenstein was also editor and principal writer of the first Hebrew encyclopedia, *Oẓar Yisrael* (The Treasury of Israel) which was published in ten volumes (1910-1913). Eisenstein's fame also rests on his anthologies, for which he earned the epithet "master of treasuries" (as all his anthologies bore the title *Oẓar* [treasury]). These include *Oẓar Midrashim*, *Oẓar Dinim u-Minhagim* (Laws and Customs), *Oẓar Derushim Nivharim* (Selected Homilies), *Oẓar Derashot* (Sermons), *Oẓar Perushim ve-Ziyyurim al Haggadah shel Pesah* (On the Haggadah), *Oẓar Massa'ot* (Jewish Travel Literature), *Oẓar Ma'amarei Tanakh* (A Biblical Concordance), *Oẓar Ma'amarei Hazal* (Rabbinical Aphorisms); *Oẓar Vikkuhim* (Disputations) and *Oẓar Musar u-Middot* (Ethics and Morals).

For the centennial celebration of American independence in 1876, Moses Aaron Schreiber, cantor of Congregation Shaarey Tefilah in New York City wrote a long poem entitled *Minhat Yehudah* (The Offering of Judah). It is an historical account of the American people and describes the mass of stricken humanity who flock to the shores of America yearning to breathe free. The theme of immigration also inspired Emma Lazarus, whose sonnet, "The New Colossus" (written in English), depicted America as the mother of exiles extending a world-wide welcome to all

victims of oppression. Sabato Morais, first president of The Jewish Theological Society of America, dedicated an admiring Hebrew poem to Emma Lazarus. Abraham Luria, in his passionate love of liberty and loyalty to America, composed a Hebrew poem to President McKinley in an intensely patriotic vein.

But most of the other early American Hebrew writers were critical of the American milieu: its vulgarity, its changed values, its preoccupation with trivial matters and the democratization of society which undermined the place of the learned and the erudite. Their denunciation of internal quarrels and communal ills was particularly keen. They even deplored the chaos in Jewish organizational life. They could not reconcile themselves to the fact that knowledge, learning, and status were no longer parallel to what they were in the Old Country.

The entire fabric of traditional Jewish life changed under the impact of America. The Golden Calf became a standard metaphor. Abraham Moses Shereshevsky, rabbi in Portland, Maine, at the turn of the century, lashed out against American Jewry:

Just as our forefathers . . . crossed the sea and made the Golden Calf, so do their sons after them in this country; after they crossed the Atlantic, they bowed and prostrated themselves before the Golden Calf.

Another early Hebrew author complains: "The basis of all things in America is the dollar . . . it's the aim, it's the glory, it's the power, it's the one true document according to which most people evaluate their deeds in this city and country."

Though American Hebrew literature cannot boast of a single novel of importance or of a single drama by the beginning of the twentieth century, two writers, Gershon Rosenzweig (1861-1914) and Naphtali Hertz Imber (1856-1909), did exhibit marked individuality.

Rosenzweig wrote in prose, and injected a note of mordant wit into Hebrew literature with his merciless castigation of Jewish professionals and Jewish occupations in the United States. His *Talmud Yankee* (Yankee Talmud) which appeared in book form in 1907, was an important contribution to Hebrew satire.²

Naphtali Hertz Imber, who made his reputation as author of *Hatikvah* (The Hope), which became the national Jewish anthem before he reached the shores of America in 1892, deplored his own lot in verse. But his addiction to alcohol lessened his sensitivity and output. He was attracted to Omar Khayyam, whose poem, "The Rubaiyat," he translated from Fitzgerald's English version into Hebrew under the title *Ha-Kos* (The Cup).

There soon followed other wielders of the Hebrew pen. As we look

2. *Talmud Yankee* first appeared as a series of articles in a periodical, *Ha-Deborah*, which Rosenzweig edited. The pages of that collection of satires resemble the pages of the Talmud: the text, in large letters, wreathed by commentary in Rashi script, is divided into six tractates.

back at their work today, we find their contributions significant, but, in their day, they made very little impact on the Jewish world.

American Themes

One of the first Hebrew writers to become acutely aware of new thematic potentialities in this country was Benjamin Nahum Silkiner (1882-1933). In 1909, a year which is remembered as a turning point in the history of Hebrew literature in America, he presented the Hebrew reading public with the first important and native Hebrew poem on Indian lore, *Mul Ohel Timmurah* (Opposite the Tent of Timmurah). An epic in which the struggle of an Indian tribe to maintain its existence is depicted, it was cast in the form of a story told to an Indian girl by her father, Timmurah. With a fine sensitivity to the early injustices of the white man and with an excellent command of the Hebrew language, Silkiner succeeded in portraying the Indian against the background of primitive religion and barbarous cruelties.

Neither Longfellow's "Song of Hiawatha," which was translated into Hebrew by Saul Tchernichovsky, nor Silkiner's revival of the lost civilization of the Red Man, pick up the themes of Hebrew literature in our day, yet, *Mul Ohel Timmurah* was a milestone. It was the first important epic on a native theme. A similar work by Ephraim Lisitzky, *Medurot Do'akhot* (Dying Campfires), appeared much later, in 1937. It, too, is based on Indian legends, treats the topic of Indian civilization before its destruction and, like Silkiner's epic, tends to idealize the noble savage.

The contemporaries of Silkiner and younger Hebrew writers seized upon new and native American themes: the Spanish conquest of America, early American civilization and the American landscape. The subtle integration of the Negroes as a subject in Hebrew poetry by Ephraim Lisitzky (1885-1962), the precise and poetic diction of Israel Efros (1891-), who delved into American history and the feverish days of the Gold Rush and also drew upon Indian lore for his *Wigwamim Shotekim* (Silent Wigwams), and the lyricism of the Mormon litany and Negro spirituals as expressed by Hillel Bavli (1893-1961), introduced a new folk-world of imagery and ideas into Hebrew literature.

In the future, the literary historian will find an interesting field of research in cultural fertilization. For a sensitive investigation of the works of Silkiner and Lisitzky, Bavli and Efros, Halkin and Regelson, Ginsburg and Feinstein, Grossman-Avinoam (later in Israel) and Preil, as well as other Hebrew writers in the United States, will reveal that, without neglecting Jewish themes for their verse, they also drew upon native ones.

Anglo-American Literary Influences

The end of World War I marked an important point in the development of Hebrew literature. Anglo-American literature, which had, until

then, exerted a negligible influence, now became an important factor. In the 19th century, Hebrew literature had been dominated by German and Slavic writing. Before the Russian Revolution of 1917, it had been concentrated in Eastern Europe, but, after the First World War, the attitude of the Communist government towards the Hebrew language as a reactionary and counter-revolutionary instrument nearly stilled its voice. With the rise of the Nazis to power, the splinter center of Hebrew literature which had flourished in Germany was destroyed. The Nazi occupation of Poland almost obliterated creativity in Hebrew there. Palestine, with its pioneering settlers and writers, rapidly emerged as the new home of Hebrew writing, and, at the same time, a young Hebrew literature of considerable import developed in the United States.

Both in Palestine and in the United States, Hebrew literature was chiefly a literature of immigrants — people whose roots were not in the country where they lived. Laboring in tension which was perhaps a contributory factor to creative efforts, the writers reflected a multi-loyal attitude to the world; they either reconciled the import of their new environment or drew on the successive layers of their lives and the lives of their forebears as if they had been separate and unrelated.

In the early years of the twentieth century, the Hebrew writer in America conquered new ground. To the German, Russian and Polish influences he added a new one — the literature of the English-speaking countries. He not only translated Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, Tennyson, Poe and Whitman; he wrote essays on American and English authors that reflected his extensive study of them. And Hebrew poets, especially Simon Halkin (1898-), Abraham Regelson (1896-), Reuben Grossman-Avinoam (1905-1976), and Gabriel Preil (1911-) cannot be properly evaluated without constant references to English and American literature. Even older poets, like Abraham Samuel Schwartz (1846-1931) and Simon Ginsburg (1890-1944), who had not received their formal education in this country, were profoundly touched by Anglo-American influences.

Simon Halkin was the first Hebrew poet to adopt the techniques of the Shakespearean sonnet and to use them in a cycle of thirty-six poems which make up his volume, *Be-Yamim Shishah u-be-Lelot Shiv'ah* (In Six Days and Seven Nights). They are considered the best depictions of frustrated love in modern Hebrew literature. In them and in his ambitious poem, *Tarshishah* (To Tarshish), he expresses the conviction that an exterior life presses on our lives, disrupts relationships and welds incongruous elements. Of his numerous translations, that of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1952) is outstanding. He also translated Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* and *King John*.

Abraham Regelson was guided by Robert Browning toward a poetic form which was most congenial to his considerable talents — the dramatic monologue. He learned from John Milton the use of pathos and the use of the

long phrase and John Keats lured him into the world of mythologies. Yet, not only in subject matter, but in form, he remained essentially a Hebrew poet whose technique was poetic *midrash*.

Other Anglo-American Influences

The greatest impact on Hebrew writers in America, however, was made by Negro civilization: by spirituals, folk songs, sermons, and the Negro sense of rhythm. Hillel Bavli, who as Hebrew poet and educator, covered a broad range of themes — personal love, love of his people and love of Eretz Israel — in his critical article which included translations from Negro poetry, pioneered in the field of critical appraisal of the Negro. Bavli was also one of the first Hebrew poets to focus on daily life in America. Thus, in a lengthy poem entitled “Mrs. Woods,” he created the charming portrait of a country woman of simple taste and honest demeanor who is an Americanized version of the idealized characters of Abraham Mapu’s novel *Ahavat Zion* (The Love of Zion), the first Hebrew novel and, also, the world’s first novel in a Biblical setting.

Other Hebrew poets and novelists, like Reuben Grossman-Avinoam and Simon Ginsburg, blended their memories of great literary yesterdays in Eastern Europe with the newer themes of Anglo-American literature. Several volumes of Grossman-Avinoam’s poetry, a book of stories on Jewish life in America, and his translations from the works of Jack London, Edgar Allan Poe, H.G. Wells, Israel Zangwill and Ludwig Lewisohn, were published in Israel.

Essentially a romantic poet, Simon Ginsburg was attracted to the American rural landscape and even to New York City, though he was repelled by its noise. In *Ahavat Hosea* (The Love of Hosea), he reveals dramatic ability: the twilight of the Northern Kingdom and the regeneration of Jews on the eve of disaster are used to point a significant lesson for contemporary Jewry. Ginsburg also translated Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” into Hebrew, as well as poems by Tennyson, Byron and Poe.

One of the most outstanding Hebrew poets and literary critics in America, whose sympathies and emotions were aroused by the poor and downtrodden races is Eisig Silberschlag (1903-), former Dean of the Hebrew Teachers College in Boston and now professor of Hebrew literature at the University of Austin in Texas. Silberschlag lets the Negro speak for himself and allows the reader to draw an analogy to his own fate. Thus, in his cycle of poems, *Mi-Pi Kushim* (Out of the Mouths of Negroes), he achieves a subtle integration of the Negro into Hebrew poetry. The American landscape, too, is drawn on in all three collections of his poetry: *Bi-Shevilim Bodedim* (In Lonely Paths), *‘Aleh, ‘Olam Be-Shir* (Arise, World, to Song) and *Kimron Yamai* (Arch of Days).

Regelson and Halkin, who have spent the latter decades of their lives in Israel, are still very much American in the poetical texture of their

work. So was Moses Feinstein (1896-1964), a Hebrew poet and educator, the founder and Dean of the Herzliah Hebrew Teachers' College in New York City. Feinstein learned a great deal from Victorian poetry. He was also attracted to the theme of redemption which he expressed in two narrative poems, *Halom ve-Goral* (Dream and Destiny) and *Avraham Abulafia*, a description of the thirteenth century mystic who sought to convert Pope Nicholas III to Judaism.

American Influences

While Regelson, Halkin and Feinstein are primarily indebted to English literature, Gabriel Preil, a modern lyric poet, has drawn on the resources of American literature. Preil, who has lived all but the early years of his life in New York City, has translated Carl Sandburg's "Prairie," as well as some of Walt Whitman's and Robert Frost's poems. He is especially drawn to free verse, which is almost his exclusive form. His lyrical pieces, which form the bulk of his collected poems, usually move in subtle, unrhymed patterns on the boundary between prose and poetry. He is the only Hebrew poet of things and facts. He seeks to establish the inner identity of whatever might be the raw material of man's associative powers: a map, a mailbox, a picture of Vincent Van Gogh, Lincoln Center in New York, or Central Park, a Chinese sketch or an Israeli postage stamp, all serve as the foci for poetical insights and poetic, reflective moods. It is no mere chance that the Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont landscapes fascinate him. The cool sobriety of the northern regions corresponds to his temperament.

It is not only the Hebrew poet who was attracted to the American scene. The Hebrew novelists and short story writers in this country took an occasional cursory glance at gentile Americans, but usually their hero was the Jewish immigrant in the early stages of Americanization — the *yarkon* (greenhorn) or, at best, the first-generation American.

In prose fiction, the leading Hebrew writers in America were Isaac Dov Berkowitz (1885-1967), Reuben Wallenrod (1899-1966), Yohannan Twersky (1900-1967) and Samuel Blank (1892-1962), their themes ranging over many lands and epochs, with Wallenrod being perhaps the keenest observer of the American scene.

It was Isaac Dov Berkowitz, the novelist, short story writer and master translator from the Yiddish of his father-in-law, Sholom Aleichem, into immaculate Hebrew, who became the voice of the uprooted in America. Perhaps the most sympathetic and sensitive portrayer of the immigrant, he depicts, in an exemplary Hebrew style, the confusion of the newcomer in this country and his longing for "the other side." In imitation of Sholom Aleichem he wrote *Yarkon* (Greenhorn), a short story in monologue which is both pathetic and witty at the same time. Sometimes he turned to the life of immigrants in the United States, as in his comedy, *Ba'Arazot ha-Rehokot* (In the Distant Lands) which is full of love for the older and unadjustable

type of Jewish and Gentile immigrant. Sometimes he indulged in a *roman à clef*: *Yemot ha-Mashiah* (Days of the Messiah) (1938), which reflects the inner turmoil of an un-Americanized Jew from Russia, who foresees wild possibilities of freedom when Czarist Russia suddenly changes into a free republic. In it, he hints at real characters and at the struggle between the Revisionists and the Labor Zionists. America is no more than a station or a stopover on the way to the ancestral home of the Jew. Berkowitz himself left this country at the end of the twenties to go to Eretz Yisrael, as do his heroes.

Although Berkowitz never struck roots in America, he had a profound influence on its Hebrew literature. His refined, almost precious style, his choice of subject matter, and his editorial imprint on the monthly journal *Miklat* (Refuge), which appeared briefly after World War I, all educated a generation of Hebrew writers during their formative years.

The Hebrew short stories and novels of Reuben Wallenrod deliberately abandoned the old themes and realistically explored the life of the first- and second-generation Jew in America in search of a new identity. Though the type is different, the Jew is an individual in the tradition of Berkowitz — suffering, unadjusted and frequently unadjustable — as he starts at the bottom and never reaches the top. He listens to advice but does not benefit by it. "In America you have to begin from the ground up, you have to suffer a bit and wait for an opportunity." Thus begins his story *Hizdamnut* (Opportunity). Wallenrod's novels, *Ki Fanah Yom* (Dusk in the Catskills), and *Be-Ein Dor* (At Ein Dor), as well as his collections of short stories *Ba-D'yotah ha-Shelishit* (On the Third Floor) and *Bein Homot New York* (Within the Walls of New York), show a fine understanding of Jewish life in this country.

Other Hebrew writers in America also made important thematic innovations. Yohannan Twersky, though he settled in Israel in 1947, wrote most of his novels in this country: a prodigious outpouring of historical novels, romanticized biographies and short stories. Among his subjects are historical personalities culled from the past such as Rashi, Uriel da Costa, Alfred Dreyfus and Aḥad Ha-Am. Twersky was the first Hebrew writer who was guided by Freud and Adler. His application of psychological conceptions to the interpretation of historical events made Twersky what he was — a novelist who held the interest of his readers.

Zenith: 1914–1960

Probably the most outstanding Hebrew writer in America for a generation was Reuben Brainin (1862–1939), who was known the world over for his many volumes of essays, biographies, novels and short stories. During his long life, Brainin wrote in Russian, German, Yiddish and Hebrew, for he was born in Russia, educated in Vienna and lived in many lands before settling here. He was one of the earliest supporters of Herzl and helped him prepare for the first Zionist Congress. Brainin champi-

oned a wide range of literary predilections in the influential Hebrew periodical *Ha-Toren* and was responsible for that universality of interests which was so characteristic of the generation of Hebrew writers in America between the two World Wars.

Though Hebrew humor in America lacked the genius of Sholom Aleichem or Mendele Mocher Sefarim, both of whom wrote books in Yiddish, it had a long line of practitioners, the foremost being the feuilletonist, light-hearted essayist and grammarian, Daniel Persky (1887-1962). From 1921 until his final days, with the exception of six years spent in Israel and Europe, he taught Hebrew language and syntax at the Herzliah Hebrew Teachers Institute in New York City. For many years he published a weekly humor column which enjoyed great popularity in each issue of the *Hadoar*. His books are largely drawn from these articles. A leading figure in Hebrew-speaking circles in the United States, he carried on a voluminous correspondence with Hebrew writers all over the world. His visiting card bore the motto "I am a slave of Hebrew forever."

In the scholarly world there was also creativity in Hebrew. Professor Israel Davidson (1870-1939), essayist, researcher and scholar of medieval Hebrew literature, put out a magnum opus, *Ozar ha-Shirah ve-ha-Piyyut* (Treasury of Medieval Hebrew Poetry), which has remained an indispensable work of reference. Samuel Isaac Feigin (1893-1950), orientalist and Bible scholar, wrote *Mi-Sitrei he-^cAvar* (From the Secrets of the Past), a collection of scholarly studies on Biblical themes, and *Anshei Sefer* (Men of the Book), a collection of biographical essays. Abraham Epstein (1880-1952), who started his teaching career on the faculty of the Hebrew Teachers Seminary in Odessa and later taught at the Herzliah Hebrew Teachers Institute in New York, was an able literary critic whose *Soferim Ivrim ba-²Americah* (Hebrew Writers in America) is still a standard work. Dr. Pinchas Churgin (1894-1957), professor of Jewish history and Dean of the Teachers Institute of Yeshiva College, specialized in the study of the *Targumim* and the history of the Second Temple period, and his well-documented essays on historical and textual material are charged with poetic overtones. Dr. Saul Lieberman, Rector of The Jewish Theological Seminary of America and Louis Ginzburg Professor of Palestinian Institutions, is working on a definitive commentary in Hebrew on the *Tosefta*, called *Tosefta ki-Feshutah*, twelve volumes of which have already been published. He is noted as the discoverer of one of Maimonides' major works on ancient Jewish law which had been lost for more than seven centuries. Others, too, have given to Hebrew literature a wealth of learning and criticism in the form of substantial scholarly works whose influence has touched Hebrew readers everywhere.

The following significant Hebrew writers, among many others, richly deserve to be mentioned: Meyer Waxman (1887-1969), author of a five volume *History of Jewish Literature* from the end of the Biblical period to the present time, as well as many other scholarly studies on Hebrew thought

and literature; Aaron Zeitlin (1898-1976), a philosophical aesthete, deeply rooted in Jewish tradition and mysticism, whose lyrics are often contemplative liturgical hymns and whose dramatic poem, *Bein ha-ʿEsh ve-ha-Yesha* (Between Fire and Deliverance), focused on the destruction of European Jewry; and Zvi Scharfstein (1884-1972), Hebrew educator, journalist and publisher, a prodigious contributor to the Hebrew press, whose weekly column in *Hadoar* dealt with political and especially literary events. All of these have contributed to the flowering of Hebrew literature in America.

Numerous books, written in Hebrew, nearly all of them by Orthodox rabbis, continue to appear in America, in line with old world traditions. They are pious works of homiletics, Biblical and Talmudical exegesis, responsa and *hiddushim* in which the author displays new interpretations in order to clarify *halakhah*. Among the authors of responsa may be mentioned Rabbi Moses Feinstein (1895-), head of New York's Mesivta Tifereth Yerushalayim, whose responsa are entitled *Iggerot Moshe* and follow the *Shulhan Arukh*, *Orah Hayyim* and *Yoreh De'ah*. Ephraim Oshry, (1914-), a survivor of the concentration camps, in his *Mi-Ma'amakim* (Out of the Depths), deals with the problems of the Holocaust.

Three periodicals of the twentieth century fostered high-level essays and critiques of Hebrew and non-Hebraic writing: *Miklat* (1920-1921), *Ha-Toren* (1917-1925) and *Ha-Tekufah* (1930-1931). They have ceased publication, but journals like *Hadoar* (The Post) and *Bitzaron* (The Fortress), which began to appear in 1922 and 1939 respectively, still publish literary criticism. *Hadoar* owed its original impetus to Menachem Ribalow, an excellent journalist and major literary critic who, for over thirty years, wrote its weekly editorials. Of the many scholars who wrote essays on rabbinic subjects, probably the most famous was Professor Chaim Tchernowitz (Rav Tzair), who for many years edited *Bitzaron*, the only Hebrew monthly in America, now edited by Hayim Leaf. These periodicals, particularly *Hadoar*, were supported by a group of enthusiastic Hebraists who organized themselves under the name of *Histadrut Ivrit*.

Future Outlook

On the whole, Hebrew literature in America in the 1970s became less potent, though Gabriel Preil did win acclaim in Israel. Isaiah Rabinowitz continues to write serious criticism which questions the growing tendency of some Israelis to apply the methods of New Criticism to Hebrew literature. Avraham Band (1929-), published a major work on Shmuel Yosef Agnon, the Nobel laureate for literature of 1966 and one of the central figures in modern Hebrew fiction; Jacob Kabakoff, professor and chairman of the Department of Hebrew Studies at Lehman College of the City University of New York, has emerged as a major historian of American Hebrew literature.

While many of the Hebrew writers in America who brought about a minor renaissance in the last fifty years have passed away, the few who survive here are old and beyond their literary prime, and the new are yet to come. Nonetheless, the contributions made in America to all branches of Hebrew literature — poetry, fiction and non-fiction, the essay, the novel, and works in translation — are impressive in both quality and quantity. There seems to be little prospect, however, that the Hebrew literary efflorescence in this country will recover the force that it had in its prime. There is only sporadic evidence of native Hebrew writers in America.

While, in Israel, Hebrew literature draws its sustenance from the soil and the sky, from the language and the life of the land, in America it is an exotic growth, satisfying primarily the needs of the writer and a comparatively small Hebrew-speaking group. In Israel there is an overwhelming concern for the immediate; in America there is a leisurely yearning for the eternal. A “realistic,” soil-bound literature is predominant in Israel; in America, Hebrew literature is more “romantic,” more soul-bound.

Although new talent, new readers and new writers can spring up at any time, a small center, mainly nurtured by Israelis living in the United States and by a limited American audience, will probably survive.

Why Did Esau Spurn the Birthright?: A Study in Biblical Interpretation

REUBEN AHRONI

GENESIS 25:29-34 PROVIDES US WITH A unique episode wherein a first-born male (Esau, the seller) disposes of his birthright for a certain price (some bread and a pottage of lentils) in favor of his younger brother (Jacob, the buyer). This episode is utterly incongruous with the Biblical laws and customs which relate to primogeniture. Furthermore, it has no parallel in the Ancient Eastern laws hitherto known to us. Though it is possible that the incident reflects an ancient custom that might have been prevalent in Near Eastern societies, it seems to be the only recorded case of this nature. The Nuzu tablet (HV 99) does not portray a similar event, as Cyrus H. Gordon claims, nor does Tablet N 204.¹ These documents relate to the sale of inheritance rights² and not to the sale of primogeniture, which has much broader implications than mere inheritance.

References to primogeniture in Ancient Eastern records clearly indicate, as E.A. Speiser³ and others⁴ have shown, that the primacy of birth was a matter of the father's discretion, irrespective of chronological priority. The father, according to these documents, could, if he so desired, arbitrarily annul the birthright of his eldest son by a mere decree and bestow it upon a younger one. However, with regard to primogeniture in Biblical times, the Biblical *laws* are clearly at variance with the aforementioned Near Eastern patterns. To be sure, the Hebrew Scriptures do record some cases wherein fathers transferred the birthright from the elder son to a younger one.⁵ This is especially true of instances where the

1. Cyrus H. Gordon, "Biblical Customs and the Nuzu Tablets," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, III (February, 1940): 4-5.

2. According to Nuzu tablet N 204, a man by the name of Tupkitilla transfers his inheritance rights involving a grove to his brother, Kurpazah, in exchange for three sheep. The main part of the text reads: "On the day they divide the grove (that lies) on the road of the town of Lumti . . . Tupkitilla shall give it to Kurpazah as his inheritance share. And Kurpazah has taken three sheep to Tupkitilla in exchange for his inheritance share" (Ibid., p. 5).

3. E.A. Speiser, "I Know Not the Day of My Death," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXXIV (1955): 255. See also his *Genesis*, Anchor Bible (New York: Garden City, 1964), p. 213.

4. See, e.g., Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, trans. by John McHugh (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1962), pp. 41-42, 53; I. Mendelsohn, "On the Preferential Status of the Eldest Son," *BASOR*, CLVI (1959): 38-40; Nahum M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1966), pp. 184-187.

5. Abraham displaced Ishmael in favor of Isaac, the younger son (Gen. 21:14; 25:5).

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firstborn son committed a grave offense, or where a younger son proved himself to be more worthy of the dignity. Thus, Reuben was displaced by his father Jacob, “forasmuch as he defiled his father’s couch, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph.”⁶

In any event, such Biblical instances should not be construed as a reflection of ordinary, contemporary Hurrian-Canaanite custom,⁷ whereby the father could arbitrarily displace his elder son in favor of a younger one, nor should it be viewed as a sign of the custom of ultimogeniture (“junior right”), which prevailed in some ancient Near Eastern societies.⁸ As was suggested by Roland de Vaux, such exceptions might “merely emphasize the tension between juridical custom and the love which tended to make a father most fond of a son born in his old age.”⁹ The general rule of primogeniture is laid down in Deuteronomy 21:15-17. It safeguards the rights of the firstborn and categorically forbids the father from displacing that son and transferring his rights to another. That this law is very ancient is, as Prof. Gordis pointed out to me, supported by the fact that the closing clauses of verse 17 exhibit both parallelism and a metric pattern. Thus, Biblical law makes it impossible for the father indiscriminately to regulate the status of primacy of birth.

What is remarkable in the narrative of the Jacob-Esau episode is not the mere transfer of the birthright from the elder to the younger son. Rather, it is the fact that, in this specific case, primogeniture was treated like any merchandise, subject to purchase through an agreement between the parties concerned — the seller and the buyer. And, indeed, this transfer of the birthright from Esau to Jacob is conducted like an ordinary commercial transaction. Esau literally barter away his birthright. Moreover, this transaction is assumed to be valid even without the father’s sanction or knowledge. Because of its uniqueness, the episode commands a continued study.

According to Genesis 25:34, Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for some bread and a pottage of lentils. But what, precisely, did Jacob acquire in this transaction? In other words, what benefits accrued from the status of primogeniture in Biblical society? Our narrative does not enlighten us on this issue. However, the overall picture which emerges from the occasional and isolated references in the Hebrew Scriptures to this topic is that Biblical society accorded to the firstborn a preferential social status. This seems to have originated in the conviction that the firstborn male was

However, as Prof. Robert Gordis has pointed out, this case involves a *pillegesh* (a mistress), whose inferior status almost surely precluded the right of inheritance. But see, also, Gen. 48:14-19; 1 Kgs. 1:29-49. See also Gen. 4:3-5 and 1 Sam. 16:6-13, which may also belong to this category of displacement.

6. 1 Chr. 5:1. See also, Gen. 49:3-4. The nature of this unfortunate incident is revealed in Gen. 35:22.

7. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, p. 185.

8. John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis (ICC)* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910), p. 362; de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, p. 42.

9. de Vaux, *Ibid.*

sacred, the exclusive possession of God, as was, similarly, the first fruit of the soil and the male firstling of the herd and flock.¹⁰ This sanctity entitled the firstborn to special prerogatives. During his father's lifetime he was accorded precedence over his brothers. Thus, Jacob addresses Reuben as "My might and first fruit of my vigor, exceeding in rank and exceeding in honor" (Gen. 49:3).¹¹ Likewise, God refers to Israel as "My firstborn son" (Exod. 4:22) to emphasize the superior status of His Chosen People and to signify the unique, intimate relationship which prevailed between them.¹²

Of much greater significance are those privileges to which the firstborn was entitled after his father's death — those which are associated with what Deuteronomy 21:17 terms *mishpat hab'khorah* (the right of the firstborn). This law prescribes to the firstborn *pi sh'nayim* (a double portion)¹³ of whatever possessions the father leaves.¹⁴

Why, then, would Esau so readily relinquish the preferential status (social and material) which is associated with primogeniture? One possible explanation of Esau's enigmatic behavior may be found in the divine prenatal oracle which destines the younger brother to preeminence and superiority over his older brother:

And the Lord answered her:
Two nations are in your womb,
Two peoples apart while still in your body;
One people shall be mightier than the other
And the older shall serve the younger (Gen. 25:23).

However, the Biblical doctrine with regard to human freedom seems to hinge upon a dialectical tension. On the one hand, the Scriptures stress

10. Cf., Exod. 13:2; 22:28-29; Num. 8:14-18; Deut. 15:19. See also Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, p. 184. While the first issue of the womb of every clean animal is offered to God, the firstborn of man is redeemed (Exod. 34:20; Num. 18:15).

11. See also, Gen. 27:29, 37; 49:8; 2 Chr. 21:3.

12. See Shalom M. Paul, "Adoption Formulae" (Hebrew), *Eretz-Israel*, H.L. Ginsberg Volume, XIV (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1978), pp. 31-36.

13. In his article, "A Note on I Sam. 13:21" (*Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXI, [1942]: 209-211), Professor Gordis maintains that the Hebrew phrase *sh'nayim*, which in Deut. 21:17 and 2 Kgs. 2:9 is generally rendered "a double portion," means two parts (out of three). Gordis' understanding of this phrase is corroborated by the use of the same phrase in Zech. 13:8, according to which *pi sh'nayim* of the land's population "shall be cut off and die, but the third (part) shall be left therein." Hence, the law of primogeniture in Deut. 21:17-19 provided the firstborn with two-thirds of the father's inheritance. However, this provision, as Gordis shows in "The Ethical Dimension in the Halakhah" (*Conservative Judaism*, XXVI [1971-72]: 70-74), sustained a different treatment in Rabbinic Judaism. In their effort to bring the demands of the laws into harmony and conformity with their ethical insights and standards of equity, the Sages favored the view that the *pi sh'nayim* means "double that of the other brothers," not two-thirds of the estate.

14. This provision of a preferential share of the inheritance to the firstborn is, as Mendelsohn points out, "a reiteration of an old custom" ("On the Preferential Status of the Eldest Son," p. 38, n. 9). See also Gen. 48:22; 49:3; Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, tr. by John H. Marks (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), p. 138. That this law sanctions an established usage can be adduced by comparing it with Ancient Near Eastern laws. According to the Code of Hammurabi (ANET, 173:170), the firstborn receives a preferential share, while the Middle Assyrian laws (ANET, Tablet B, p. 185) prescribe "two portions" for the oldest son.

the absolute sovereignty of God, His omnipotence and foreknowledge. Hence, human fate and destiny are divinely determined. But, on the other hand, the Scriptures equally insist that God's foreknowledge does not preclude human freedom: man is endowed with the power of self-determination and he is possessed of the ability to choose between conflicting courses of action. Hence, his spiritual autonomy and moral responsibility.¹⁵

Such dialectical tension is prevalent in the Jacob-Esau story, where the drama seems to unfold a divine master plan in which the fate of individuals and nations is preordained. However, this is also a drama of human actions, in which the development of the plot is conditioned by human motives and guided by innate characteristics of the personalities involved. This fact is particularly true with regard to the other two episodes of the story, the selling of the birthright (Gen. 25:21-28), and the struggle for the blessing (Genesis 27). The theological component is left in the background and the story seems to develop immanently governed by the principle of causality. It is doubtful that Jacob or Esau was cognizant of the prenatal oracle or aware of the consequences of the agreement with regard to the divine promises.¹⁶

What prompted Esau to sell his birthright? The Biblical text does not provide any solid or clear-cut motive for Esau's renunciation of it, except for his own vague utterance, "Behold, I am at the point of death, so of what use is my birthright to me?" (Gen. 25:32). But what is the import of that statement? Numerous suggestions have been advanced,¹⁷ but it will suffice to concentrate on the interpretation of two well-known medieval commentators, Nahmanides¹⁸ and Abraham Ibn Ezra.¹⁹ In his lengthy discussion of this verse, Nahmanides asserts that Esau's disdain of the birthright was motivated primarily by two factors:

(a) Esau was conscious of the fact that his life as a hunter exposed him to severe dangers. He believed that he would die in the course of a

15. The Biblical references with regard to this doctrine are too numerous to list here. See, e.g., Gen. 4:7; Deut. 30:15-19, 11:26-28; Lev. 26; Jer. 21:8; Job 34:11. The Sages wrestled with the problem of reconciling God's prescience with the idea of human freedom and came up with the seemingly compromising maxim, "Everything is in the power of Heaven except the fear of heaven" (TB *Berakhot* 33b and *Megillah* 25a). This doctrine is also presented in a similar terse Talmudic maxim attributed to Rabbi Akiva, "All is foreseen, yet freedom of action is granted" (*Avot* 3:19). On this topic, see Samuel S. Cohon, *Jewish Theology* (Assen: Royal Vangorcum Ltd., 1971), pp. 309-344; Solomon Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), pp. 284-289.

16. See von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 268.

17. See, e.g., Skinner, *Genesis*, p. 362; von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 267.

18. Moses ben Nahman (1194-1270); also known as Ramban (an acronym of Rabbi Moses Ben Nahman). He was a philosopher, poet, Biblical exegete, and one of the leading authors of Talmudic literature in the Middle Ages. See the entry "Nahmanides" in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, XII (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1971), pp. 774-782.

19. Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089-1164) was a poet, grammarian, Biblical commentator, astronomer and physician. See the entry "Ibn Ezra Abraham" in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, VIII, pp. 1163-1169.

hunt, probably during his father's lifetime. Since the chief privileges of primogeniture materialize only after the death of the father, he would not benefit anyway from them. Of what advantage, then, Esau might have reasoned, was the birthright to him?

(b) The law of double portion to which the firstborn is entitled, according to the statutes of the Torah, was possibly not in effect in patriarchal times. The birthright was then only a matter of inheriting the pre-eminence of the father and his authority.²⁰

It seems to me, however, that Nahmanides' interpretation is merely conjecture which fails to be substantiated on textual or other grounds. Attention has been called above to indications, both of style and substance, that tend to support the view that the law of double portion (*pi sh'nayim*) was very ancient. Moreover, if the concern for premature death motivated Esau to renounce his birthright, he would not have struggled so vigorously for the blessing. A man who is about to die — what benefit would a blessing be to him?

Another, simpler, approach is presented by Abraham Ibn Ezra who maintains that Esau despised the birthright because he saw that his father was destitute of wealth. According to him, the fact that Isaac was poor can be adduced from the following Scriptural indications:

(a) Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his venison (Gen. 25:28).

(b) If Isaac was rich he would have eaten savory meat every day. What reason was there for him to ask Esau to bring him some venison?

(c) Had there been abundant food in his father's house, Esau would not have sold his birthright for a pottage of lentils.

(d) Why did Jacob not have attractive clothing and why did his mother not give him some silver and gold for his journey so that he had to say (in his vow at Bethel) "If God remains with me . . . and gives me bread to eat and clothing to wear" (Gen. 28:20)?

(e) Why did Rebekah not send him some money — since she loved him — so that he would not have to tend Laban's flock?²¹

Though Ibn Ezra's interpretation is impressive and well-advanced, it poses some difficulties. Two problems in particular are troublesome: Abraham, according to Gen. 13:2, "was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold." Moreover, Genesis 25:5 tells us that all this immense wealth was bequeathed to Isaac. Ibn Ezra is not unaware of these verses and he knows that "many might wonder about this." "But," he contends, "have they never seen a person who was wealthy in his younger years become impoverished in his old age?" This medieval commentator, then, attributes all of those passages which relate to Isaac's prosperity to the past, to a

20. See *Genesis, Mikr'aot Gedolot* (Hebrew) (New York: Shulsinger Bros., 1950), p. 312; see also Ramban (Nahmanides), *Commentary on the Torah, Genesis*, trans. and annotated with index by Charles B. Chavel (New York: Shilo Publishing House, Inc., 1971), pp. 320-322. This is also the position of Don Ishak Abrabanel, *A Commentary on the Torah: Genesis* (Hebrew) (New York: Saphrograph Co., 1959), p. 134b.

21. See *Genesis, Mikr'aot Gedolot*, p. 312; and Ramban (trans. by Chavel), *Genesis*, pp. 320-321.

period when he was still young. But, in Isaac's later years, his fortune was reversed and all of his great wealth was lost. This misfortune, Ibn Ezra argues, is not inconsistent with God's blessing.

Only blind-hearted people think that wealth is a great distinction for the righteous. Let Elijah prove the contrary.²² [These people] further ask, "Why did God cause Isaac to lack wealth?" Perhaps they could also inform us why He caused Isaac's vision to be diminished? And let them not dismiss me with a reply based on a *d'rash*²³ for there is indeed a secret in the matter, and we must not probe since the thoughts of God are deep and no man has the power to understand them.²⁴

However, there still remains a passage (Gen. 26:12-14) which testifies to Isaac's prosperity, and this passage is subsequent to the selling of the birthright. It informs us that Isaac acquired great possessions by his own endeavor: "And the man [Isaac] waxed great, and grew more and more until he became very great. And he had possessions of flocks, and possessions of herds, and a great household . . ." Ibn Ezra insists that these verses "must refer to the period before he (Isaac) became old."²⁵ Indeed, the assumption that Chapter 26 contains material which belongs to an epoch earlier than that of Chapters 25 and 27 is one of the many profound insights in which Ibn Ezra anticipates modern Biblical scholarship by hundreds of years. Today, there is broad agreement among scholars (although with a divergence of detail) that Chapter 26, which clearly interrupts the continuity of the main Jacob-Esau narrative, is a mosaic of Isaac traditions which were later welded together. Gerhard von Rad maintains that the chapter contains no less than seven traditional units.²⁶ The events that are described probably belong to the nomadic phase in Isaac's life, when he used to move about in search of pasture for his cattle. Moreover, in Chapter 26, Rebekah is depicted as "fair to look upon" (verse 7), beautiful enough to arouse the desires of the king. This hardly presupposes a woman who is the mother of two grown sons, or even a mother at all.²⁷

Thus we have additional indications that the narrative in Chapter 26 represents an earlier period in Isaac's life. The first verse in Chapter 27

22. See 1 Kings 17:6.

23. The Aggadic answer is that Isaac's eyes became dimmed because of the smoke raised by heathen women offering incense to idols (*Tanḥuma*, *Toledot*, 3); brought further by Rashi. See also, *Genesis Rabbah*, 65:10, according to which "when our father Abraham bound his son Isaac, the ministering angels wept . . . tears dropped from their eyes into his and left their mark upon them, and so when he became old his eyes dimmed."

24. Ibn Ezra on Gen. 25:34.

25. Ibid.

26. Von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 270. These units, according to von Rad, are vvs. 1-6; 7-11; 12-14; 15-17a; 17b-22; 23-33; and 34-35.

27. Verse 34, according to many scholars, is not an integral part of this narrative, but an addition from Source P, the purpose of which is to form a link between Chapters 26 and 27. See, e.g., Skinner, *Genesis*, p. 368; von Rad, *Genesis*, pp. 269-273. Our Sages usually account for chronological discrepancies by the famous Talmudic saying, "There is neither earlier nor later in the Torah" (*Pesah*. 6:2). See Rashi on Gen. 35:29.

clearly states that Isaac "was old and his eyes were dim," and he was ready to utter his deathbed benediction. Such a statement, according to Speiser, was considered to be a final, oral disposition by the head of the household, the uttering of which had a solid legal grounding: "Of all the paternal dispositions, the one that took the form of a deathbed declaration carried the greatest weight."²⁸

That Jacob was sent away penniless is well attested in Scriptures. Jacob himself acknowledges it when he declares, "with my staff alone I crossed this Jordan" (Gen. 32:11). Ibn Ezra's contention, summarized above, finds further substantiation in Gen. 28:1-5, which tells us that Isaac called Jacob before the latter's departure and charged him not to take a wife from among the daughters of Canaan. Yet the only gift which he could bestow upon his son was another blessing.

A crude but vivid and telling illustration of Jacob's predicament is to be found in the midrashic amplification of the following verse: "On hearing the news of his sister's son Jacob, Laban ran to greet him; he embraced him and kissed him, and took him into his house. He told Laban all that had happened" (Gen. 29:13). The Midrash finds it difficult to comprehend such a profusion of affection on the part of Laban, whom Jewish tradition regards as the embodiment of chicanery and deception.²⁹ According to this midrashic exegesis Laban reasoned:

Eliezer was but an unimportant member of the household, yet it is written of him, "And the servant took ten camels" (Gen. 24:10); how much more then this man who is the beloved of his home; but when he did not even see his wallet, he embraced him, thinking, perhaps he has money in his girdle. On finding nothing at all, he kissed him, thinking, he may have precious stones which he is hiding in his mouth. Said he [Jacob] to him: "What do you think, that I come laden with wealth? I have come laden with naught but words," and so he told Laban all these things.³⁰

How are we, then, in the light of the above discussion, to understand Esau's proclamation (Gen. 25:32)? It seems to me that Esau is making two divergent, though related statements, joined by a conjunctive *waw*.³¹ The first one, "I am at the point of death," relates to his actual situation at that moment. He has just returned from the field, completely exhausted and famished,³² and expresses his predicament in figurative and hyperbolic terms, as if to say: Right now I am about to die of hunger and my concern

28. Speiser, *Genesis*, p. 212. See also his article, "I Know Not the Day Of My Death," pp. 252-254.

29. See Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Bible* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), pp. 169-172, 177-181. See also the entry "Laban" in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, X, pp. 1315-1317.

30. *Midrash Rabbah*, trans. by H. Freedman, (London: Soncino Press, 1939), II, p. 646. This is an example of a midrash which gives us a penetrating insight into the spirit and intent of a Biblical text.

31. On the syntactic function of *waw copulativum*, see Gesenius, *Hebrew Grammar*, ed. by E. Kautzsch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), pp. 484-485.

32. The text (25:29, 30) uses the word *ayef* which here means faint or weary from exertion and hunger (see Judges 8:4, 5 and BDB, p. 746).

at this point is how to satiate my appetite.³³ The second clause of his utterance expresses his attitude towards the possible tangible value of his birthright under those existing circumstances. "Of what use is my birthright to me," namely: what inheritance can I expect from a father who is, himself, dependent upon me for his daily needs?³⁴ For these reasons, Esau spurned his birthright (Gen. 25:34).

One might challenge this understanding of the verse by posing the following question: if the assumption that Isaac had no wealth and, therefore, no materialistic prerogatives could be expected in this instance by virtue of primogeniture, why would Jacob be so eager to acquire it? Of what use would it be to him? The answer to the question is to be found, in my opinion, primarily in the diametrically opposed physical and mental characteristics of the twin brothers. The contrast between them is intimated in the birth scene,³⁵ while, in the episode which relates to the selling of the birthright, these differences are made manifest. Here, Esau, as has been emphasized by exegetes and scholars, is depicted as having a crude personality, motivated by the pressing necessity of the moment. His sensual nature is well revealed in the coarse way in which he expresses himself. "Give me some of that red stuff to gulp down, for I am famished." While the use of the expression *hal'itayni* (let me gulp) suggests a ravenous appetite,³⁶ Esau's subsequent utterance (v. 32) echoes the well-known maxim: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die" (Isa. 22:13). Jacob seems to have possessed a character sharply in contrast with that of Esau's. Scripture describes him as *tam*. While the term itself is very vague, and many diverse interpretations have been suggested, one thing is clear: Esau's attitude toward the birthright is one of contempt and derogation. In contradistinction, Jacob seems to have been attracted to the spiritual aspect, and probably also to the social status, dignity and distinction, which were associated with the birthright.

Moreover, one should remember that Jacob does not risk much in this transaction. He acquires the birthright for almost nothing — just a

33. von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 266, views this picture as "robustly realistic," since "the hunter, in contrast to the shepherd . . . often does not have enough to eat. If he takes no prey, he goes hungry." See also, Skinner, *Genesis*, p. 362.

34. This concise phrasing is typical of Biblical style which is replete with tacit assumptions. The ideas are not set forth explicitly, but are hinted at. The ancient reader was counted upon to grasp its full meaning. See Robert Gordis, *The Book of God and Man* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), Chapter XIV, "The Rhetoric of Allusion and Analogy," pp. 190-197.

35. This episode depicts Esau as "hairy" and "ruddy." According to T.H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), pp. 164-165, shagginess in ancient folklore indicates animal-like characteristics and "is almost everywhere the hallmark of the primitive man," while the word "ruddy" reflects sinister and dangerous traits. Rashi, following *Genesis Rabbah* 63:24, stated that "Esau was ruddy (*admoni*), a sign that he would spill blood."

36. The use of the root *la-ot* is here a *hapax-legomenon*. However, almost all Biblical scholars agree that this root suggests bestial wildness or voracity. See, e.g., Skinner, *Genesis*, p. 361, n.

pottage of lentils. Seizing a very propitious opportunity, he extracts it from his famished brother.³⁷ No wonder that the writer of this story associated the name *Edom* (given to Esau) with Esau's voracious attraction to the *edom-edom* stuff.

It goes without saying that basic to Ibn Ezra's perspective is the conviction that the Torah is a unitary document, expressing a harmonious point of view. From our data, however, there is nothing that runs counter to the source analysis which is a foundationstone of modern scholarship. There was no need to fall back upon harmonistic exegesis. Ibn Ezra's realistic and simple explanation offers a convincing analysis of the complex issue of Esau's selling of the birthright.

29. Rashi understands the expression *hal'itayni* as "pour into my mouth," basing his understanding on a Mishnah (*Sabbath* 155b), which says: "One may not fatten up a camel on the Sabbath, but one may put food (*mal'itin*) into its mouth." So also B.A. Jacob, *Genesis*, trans. by Ernest I. Jacob and Walter Jacob, (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc.), p. 168: "The Hebrew expression is taken from the feeding of animals and characterizes the uncontrolled gluttony as well as the vulgar language of Esau."

37. See David Daube, *Studies in Biblical Law* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1947), pp. 193-198.

Martin Buber and the American Jewish Counterculture

YIZHAK AHREN and JACK NUSAN PORTER

I

EVERY SOCIETY HAS ITS HEROES AND ITS intimate enemies. Such relationships are especially evident in a so-called counterculture¹ whose members feud with a certain "Establishment" and its visible representatives, and who strive to identify alternatives, strike out in new directions, and propagate new options. In the 1960s, the New Left celebrated Ho Chi Minh and Che Guevara, and the books of Wilhelm Reich, Paul Goodman and Herbert Marcuse became required reading in leftist subcultures and on college campuses. American hippies made Thoreau their patron saint and Hermann Hesse's works experienced a revival.²

Certain books served as the basis for communal experiments — an attempt to turn a literary work into actuality. The best-known examples are the Walden Two communes, modeled after a novel by psychologist B.F. Skinner, and the Harrad West experiment, patterned after a novel by Robert Rimmer.³ Sometimes the counterculture revives traditions which, at first glance, strike one as strange. For several groups in the American counterculture, the *I Ching*, the ancient Chinese "Book of Transformations," assumed an importance that should not be underestimated. Klaus Mehnert reports about one commune that decided, on the basis of the *I Ching* oracle, to transfer itself completely from Vermont to New Mexico.⁴

The Jewish counterculture, which came into being in America and Europe after the 1967 Six-Day War, has its "gurus" and "rebbe's" as well.⁵ This counterculture had two aspects: a political one and a spiritual-cultural one. Martin Buber (1878–1965) had a great influence on the American Jewish counterculture movement and was instrumental in

1. On the concept of counterculture, cf. J. Milton Yinger, "Countercultures and Social Change," *American Sociological Review*, 42 (1977): 833-853.

2. Cf. Nathan Adler, "The Antinomian Personality: The Hippie Character Type," *Psychiatry*, 31 (1968): p. 337.

3. Cf. Vollmar, *Landkommunen in Amerika* (Berlin, 1975), pp. 38-65.

4. Klaus Mehnert, *Jugend im Zeitbruch* (Stuttgart, 1976), p. 281.

5. Cf. David Glanz, "An Interpretation of the Jewish Counterculture," *Jewish Social Studies*, XXXIX (Winter-Spring 1977): 120ff.; H. Goldmeier, *Revival in Jewish Identity* (unpublished thesis, Cambridge, Mass. 1973), p. 54; Ahren, "Die jüdische Gegenkultur in Amerika," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 25 (1973): 713ff.; Jack Nusan Porter and Peter Dreier (eds.), *Jewish Radicalism: A Selected Anthology* (New York, 1973), pp. XIIF.

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bridging the two halves; that is, finding a means of politicizing theology and theologizing politics. We will investigate what use or misuse the counterculture made of Buber's writings and what can be pursued with those writings in the future.

II

A new culture, a new religio-political movement of renewal, like the Jewish student movement,* is a diverse and multi-varied area of activity that is not easy to describe. Where shall one begin? What divisions are meaningful? One must realize that it is problematic to expect unambiguous situations and precise definitions. Rather, we observe constant transformations, and we must acknowledge that things are far more complex than an outsider may at first imagine.⁶ Only when one is ready to work with paradoxical categories like conflict, ambivalence, and transitions of this type will one understand why Buber's work became so important to the American Jewish counterculture.

Anyone familiar with the literature of the Jewish counterculture will have no difficulty in documenting Buber's influence, for he is quoted rather frequently, and often in decisive places. The first anthology from this new movement has, as an epigraph, a passage from Buber's *Hasidism and Modern Man*.⁷ Mark Goldes chose a Buber statement as a motto for his Seder haggadah⁸ and dedicated this liturgical work "to the living memory of Martin Buber."⁹ Evidently Buber is not only a recognized authority whom the members of the Jewish counterculture like to cite as support, but they find in his writings excellent formulations of what they really want to express. Here is a good example: When, in the fall of 1974, the editors of the highly regarded periodical, *Response*, presented their individual plans, one editor contented herself with a quotation from Buber! Furthermore, Buber's name need not always be mentioned; e.g., a Los Angeles poet, Mark Hurvitz, arranged a Buber anecdote about the Baal Shem Tov (the founder of Hasidism) in the form of a Star of David and juxtaposed a few additions, thus turning it into a riddle, but did not deem it necessary to state his source.¹⁰ Even if no direct reference is made to the master, there sometimes is no disregarding the fact that the authors of certain writings still are in their "buberty," if one can be pardoned that expression. The polemical poem, "This Is the Bus to Auschwitz" written

* At times, we will use the term "Jewish student movement" instead of Jewish counterculture. We are referring to the same thing.

6. Cf. Ahren, *Op. cit.*, p. 710.

7. James A. Sleeper and Alan L. Mintz, eds., *The New Jews* (New York, 1971), p. 2.

8. Cf. Ahren, *Op. cit.*, p. 711.

9. Mark Goldes, *The Coming of the Crocus. A Seder of Hope* (Sebastopol, Cal., 1977). On p. 4 the reader will find a tale about Rabbi Mendel of Rymanov: "... thus speaks the prophet Buber." Arthur I. Waskow, who reprints this anecdote in his *Shalom Seder*, tones the title down: "The sage Buber tells us . . ." (*Response*, 32 [Winter 1976-7]: 81, 105).

10. Cf. Ahren, *Op. cit.*, pp. 711ff. It is the English translation of the anecdote "Der hilfreiche Berg" in *Die Erzählungen der Chassidim* (Zurich, 1949), p. 119.

11. Included in Arthur I. Waskow, *The Bush Is Burning!* (New York, 1971), pp. 142f. Cf. also Harold Goldberg, "A Journey Into Jewish Radicalism," *Etul* (September 1973): 61f.

by members of a group called Jews for Urban Justice, invokes Buber's ideals (prophets, Hasidic communities, kibbutzim).¹¹ It was prompted by the inauguration of an "Establishment" institution, (a synagogue and J.C.C.), and the aggressive verses, to be sure, are a very American "translation" whose tone would probably have shocked Buber. As was to be expected, preoccupation with Buber's work has also led to criticism of him.¹²

Which writings of Buber have attracted the attention of the American Jewish student movement? If we follow his own arrangement of his collected writings, we can proceed from four units: Hasidism, I-Thou philosophy, Bible and Zionism/Israel/Judaism.¹³ This handy arrangement should not blind us to the inner connection of the various areas; only if one is aware of the structure of the complete work does one notice "gaps."¹⁴ To give an immediate answer to the question, we can say that young Americans have taken cognizance of and "worked on" all four units of Buber's work.

III

Buber's most popular work is, undoubtedly, his *Tales of the Hasidim*.¹⁵ In some circles these anecdotes are regarded as Torah; they are read aloud during the Sabbath meal and, side-by-side with the writings of Erich Fromm and A.J. Heschel, they are even included in English-language religious services.¹⁶ Waskow's justification for including these writings in the liturgy is remarkable; he points to a precedent: "Services in our liturgy treated Buber, Fromm, and Heschel as seriously as our forefathers' liturgy treated Maimonides in *Yigdal*."¹⁷ Let us mention parenthetically that this comparison is quite strange. Martin Buber did not participate in synagogue services as a matter of principle,¹⁸ yet the Jews for Urban Justice in Washington include him in their services. They want to "learn" something from the master but they do not want to copy his lifestyle.

The renowned Hebrew writer, S.J. Agnon, remarked several decades

12. Cf. e.g., David Glanz, "Buber's Concept of Holocaust and History," *Elul* (February 1972): 29-31; also Norman Roth, "Jewish Theology and the 'Counter-community,'" *Response*, 12 (Winter 1971-2): 82.

13. Gerhard Wehr, *Der deutsche Jude. Martin Buber* (München, 1977). Cf. H.L. Goldschmidt, in Eckert, Goldschmidt, Wachinger, *Martin Buber Ringen um Wirklichkeit* (Stuttgart, 1977), pp. 50f. Cf. also Schalom Ben-Chorin, *Zwiesprache mit Martin Buber* (Gerlingen, 1978), pp. 96f.

14. Thus Gershom Scholem writes in a memoir of his youth in a section about Talmudic literature: "Here there truly reigned that 'dialogic life' which the later Buber so expressly placed at the center of his philosophy, though, paradoxically enough, without taking cognizance of this most genuine evidence that offered itself to him in the Jewish tradition and to which he incomprehensibly remained blind" (*Von Berlin nach Jerusalem* [Frankfurt, 1977], p. 67).

15. Elie Wiesel's portraits of the Hasidic masters, *Souls on Fire*, published in 1972, also became a bestseller. There is no overlooking the fact that, in a certain respect, Wiesel treads in Buber's paths.

16. Cf. *The Bush Is Burning!*, pp. 43ff.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

18. Ben-Chorin, *Op. cit.*, pp. 72f.

ago that Buber's writings on Hasidism helped many Jews who had strayed from Judaism to rediscover the religion of their forefathers.¹⁹ Evidently, the Hasidic anecdotes make access possible to the world of a specifically Jewish tradition. While reading these stories, an outsider makes discoveries; he gains insight into new connections, comprehends the meaning of certain symbols or customs, and finds himself forced to revise his own prejudices about Hasidism and religious life. Occasionally, the reader will come to terms with a hitherto disregarded aspect of Judaism. Arthur I. Waskow's autobiographical and confessional work, *The Bush Is Burning! Radical Judaism Faces the Pharaohs of the Modern Superstate*, contains, among other things, a detailed description of a transformation which took place in 1968-69 and which the author reduces to this formula: "From Jewish Radical to Radical Jew." Many events and encounters led to this metamorphosis,²⁰ and tales about Hasidic masters also play a certain role. Let us note here that Buber's anecdotes can act as such a catalyst.

A further possibility for entering the world of the Jewish faith that Martin Buber has created may be seen in his translation of the Bible into German. The intention of this new translation, which attempts to preserve the original character of the Hebrew language, has not always been understood. For example, an article on Buber's 100th birthday contained this objection: "Why (is there) such a senseless obscuring of the Bible's contents?"²¹ Many years ago, Ernst Simon formulated the answer to this question as follows: "It is a matter of estranging the Bible in order to make it accessible again, now that it has been freed from the 'taint of familiarity' (Buber) and can once again arouse primal attention." At the celebration of Buber's completion of the Bible, Gershom Scholem said that the main intent of the enterprise may have been an invitation to the reader to go and study Hebrew!²² This meant that Buber wanted to guide his readers back to the original text. "Study Hebrew" means, of course, more than simply learning the language.

Buber's invitation to the Bible was also proclaimed by the American Jewish counterculture.²⁴ Here we must refer to Everett Fox's writings in *Response* magazine. Fox not only wrote essays about Buber's and Franz Rosenzweig's method of translation, but also tried his hand at the difficult art of Bible translation himself. He rendered the Book of Genesis into

19. S.J. Agnon, *Meazmi el azmi* (Tel Aviv, 1976), pp. 257, 263. Cf. also Jochanan Bloch, "Martin Buber — Aggada Esteti," *Haaretz*, Feb. 3, 1978, p. 18.

20. Waskow, *Op. cit.*, pp. 14ff: "Precisely on the left, where for a century the automatic dogma has been that religion was the opiate of the people, religion has been turned from a narcotic into an awakener. My own inward experiences during the spring of 1968 were not idiosyncratic; I was sharing them with scores of thousands of other Americans, including young Jews . . ."

21. Salscia Landmann, "Macht und Weisheit der Legenden," *Die Welt*, February 8, 1978, p. 21.

22. E. Simon, "Martin Buber und das deutsche Judentum," in Robert Weltsch, ed., *Deutsches Judentum* (Stuttgart, 1963), p. 83. Cf. also G. Wehr, *Op. cit.*, p. 264.

23. Gershom Scholem, *Judaica* (Frankfurt am Main, 1963), p. 209.

24. Cf. Nahum N. Glatzer's Introduction to Fox's Genesis translation.

English, based on the Buber-Rosenzweig German version. Fox also translated additional texts — the Book of Jonah, Psalm 137, and the first two chapters of the Book of Job.²⁵ In the religious communities of the Jewish student movement (e.g., the Boston group, Havurat Shalom) Fox's work is greatly appreciated.

To Scholem's worried question as to the medium in which Buber's translation would be effective, we can give an answer which Scholem certainly did not expect and which certainly could not have been foreseen in 1961²⁶: It is true that most of the children of those who have escaped the Holocaust cannot read German, but English-speaking young people now have a chance at least to become acquainted with the Bible in the way that Buber saw it and had taught others to see it.

In the Jewish counterculture, religion and politics often coalesce.²⁷ Its members study not only Buber's writings on religion but, also, his socio-philosophical and political analyses. The newsletter of a group in Washington included this notice:

Weekly seminar on Marxism, Anarchism, and Judaism. Bring a copy of Buber's *Paths in Utopia* and Marcuse's *Essay on Liberation*; we will read aloud from them as in Talmud study, stopping to discuss and raise questions whenever we wish.²⁸

Buber's basic attitude toward controversial issues in the Zionist movement is generally known in student circles and it is safe to say that his position is regarded as correct and relevant by many activists of the younger generation, though not by all.²⁹

It is not hard to guess why Buber's conflict with the prevailing Zionist ideology is so greatly admired. He wanted to work within the Zionist Organization, but, at the same time, he wished to effect basic change in its position on important questions.³⁰ The "New Jews" of the 1960s saw themselves in a similar position. They fought on campus against the increasingly anti-Israel attitude of the New Left by presenting Zionism as a liberation movement which every progressive-minded person had to support; therefore, they received financial support for various projects from established Zionist sources.³¹ But these Zionist activists did not

25. E. Fox, "We Mean The Voice: The Buber-Rosenzweig Translation of the Bible," *Response*, 12 (Winter 1971-2): 29-42; E. Fox, "In the Beginning: An English Rendition of the Book of Genesis," *Response*, 14 (Summer 1972); E. Fox, "Yona: An English Rendition," *Response*, 22 (Summer 1974): 7-22; E. Fox, "The Bible Needs To Be Read Aloud: Job 1, 2, Psalm, 137," *Response*, 33 (Spring 1977): 5-17, 27-30, 40; E. Fox, "Technical Aspects of the Translation of Genesis of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig," (unpublished dissertation, Brandeis University).

26. G. Scholem, *Judaica*, p. 215. Cf. also Ben-Chorin, *Op. cit.*, p. 161.

27. Cf., e.g., Waskow, *Op. cit.*, p. 7; Joel Harris, *The Fourth World Haggadah* (London, 1970), p. 8; William Novak, "On Leaving the Havurah," *Response*, 22 (Summer 1974): 111ff.

28. Waskow, *Op. cit.*, p. 107; also pp. 101, 137, 175.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 66. Cf. also Jev Gollin, ed., *Towards Jewish/Palestinian Reconciliation. A WUJS Political Publication* (London, 1975).

30. Cf. E. Simon, *Op. cit.*, pp. 53ff; Wehr, *Op. cit.*, pp. 215ff.

31. Glanz, *Op. cit.*, p. 122.

conceal their critical attitude toward the Zionist "Establishment" in both America and Israel.³² The World Union of Jewish Students (WUJS) which, after 1968, tried to bring about changes in major Zionist policies, finally had to fight for its own independent existence and had trouble surviving the 27th Zionist Congress (1972).³³ In internal Zionist debates, Buber represented the "loyal opposition," and that is what the representatives of the Jewish counterculture want to do.

IV

Let us now turn to another area of Buber's impact. In 1963, Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy wrote:

Buber's philosophy of I and Thou has not been absorbed, but it is respectfully quoted, though in strangely constricted form. Everyone knows the title of the book and everyone bows solemnly when it is mentioned, but that is all. For this reverence costs nothing, and everyone busily continues to treat his fellow human beings as objects of his study.³⁴

In the American counterculture, the words "I and Thou" are often referred to and, invariably, problems of norms of behavior are involved. Reminiscing about his period in the Boston Havurat Shalom, Joseph Reimer writes:

We believed — following Buber — that the test of a religious community is the extent to which its members overcome the impersonality of "I — It" relationships and are open to one another as "Thou's." I think we overestimated the extent to which intimacies could be shared among a whole community. It was hard, though, to admit this to ourselves.³⁵

Arthur Waskow has also tried to demonstrate that even complex problems of modern society can be dealt with, with the aid of Buber's basic words.³⁶

The word-pair "I — Thou" frequently crops up in discussions about Jewish religious law (*halakhah*). In this context, the reference to Buber's philosophy serves as a defence against the demand that the codified *halakhah* be recognized as a binding norm and that the law be fulfilled as far as possible.³⁷ Michael G. Berenbaum has pointed out that the debate about Jewish law which took place between Rosenzweig and Buber in the 1920s is being revived in the American Jewish counterculture fifty years

32. Cf. Porter and Dreier, eds., *Op. cit.*, pp. xxxf.; A.I. Waskow, "New Diaspora, New Israel," *Response*, 28 (Winter 1975-6): 9-24.

33. Edy Rauch, "WUJS in the 27th Zionist Congress," *Elul* (September 1973): 3-22.

34. Quoted in Wehr, *Op. cit.*, p. 270.

35. J. Reimer, "Looking Back at the Havurah," *Response*, 30-31, (Summer/Fall 1976): 244f.

Cf. Jeffrey Alan Foust, *A Study of Two Groups*, (unpublished thesis, Brandeis University, 1970), pp. 2, 18, 25. Foust points out that people in the Christian Community Interseminary House also referred to Buber's basic terms when interpersonal relationships were discussed.

36. Arthur I. Waskow, "Messianism and the New Halacha," *Response*, 21 (Spring 1974): especially 36f. and 58f.

37. Cf., e.g., Ellen M. Umansky, "The Liberal Jew and Sex," *Response*, 32 (Winter 1976-7): 71-74.

later.³⁸ He writes: "I contend that the values which inform the Havurah movement are Buberian."³⁹ This statement contains some truth, but, in the counterculture, one can also find women and men who have followed in Rosenzweig's path and are fulfilling the commandments of the Torah today. However, if one speaks of the program of a "new *halakhah*"⁴⁰ (and it is significant that the news bulletin of the Havurah movement is called *Kesher: A Havurot and New Halacha Newsletter*), antinomian tendencies are bound to be noticed. Buber said about his view of the law that it was not an a-nomism and certainly not a nomism either.⁴¹ This in-between definition is also characteristic of those who construct a "New *Halakhah*."

V

If one wishes to summarize the above analyses, the first surprising thing one notices is that Buber's works are placed in the service of conflicting tendencies. On the one hand, they facilitate access to the world of Judaism; on the other, they supply the justification for a detachment from the traditional forms of Jewish religion. Two questions suggest themselves: How can this paradoxical effect be made more comprehensible, and how can one imagine the construction (the "blueprint") of the American Jewish counterculture which makes possible such an extension of Buber's work?

Buber's teachings have been characterized as a philosophy of *religious anarchism* by pupils and interpreters like Gerschom Scholem and Baruch Kurzweil, writing independently of each other.⁴² The formulation — religious anarchism — can help us understand the strange history of its reception. In simplified form, one can say that a synthesis of different lifestyles and philosophies of life is effected, and Buber spoke of this as a "mixture."⁴³ Both those who shift their original, politically-oriented anarchism to the religious sphere (thus changing it), and those who break open their religious attitudes towards anarchism find themselves in the position of a religious anarchist. In this realm, various types of development are conceivable. In each case, however, Buber propagandizes for the other side, and this can lead not only to a metamorphosis, but to a reinforcement

38. Michael G. Berenbaum, "Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber Reconsidered," *Response*, 32 (Winter 1976-7): 25-40. On the dialogue between Buber and Rosenzweig cf. also E. Simon, *Op. cit.*, pp. 73ff. See also Paul R. Mendes-Flohr, "Buber und das nachtraditionelle Judentum," *Tribüne*, Heft 66 (1978): 118-120.

39. Berenbaum, *Op. cit.*, p. 38.

40. Waskow, "Messianism and the New Halacha;" M. Neudel, "Some Notes on a New Halakhah," *Kesher* (February 1975): 10-13. Cf. also Arthur Green, "A Contemporary Approach to Jewish Sexuality," in Sharon and Michael Strassfeld, eds., *The Second Jewish Catalog* (Philadelphia, 1976), pp. 96-99.

41. Buber quoted in Ben-Chorin, *Op. cit.*, p. 69.

42. Scholem, *Judaica*, pp. 197f. and 202; B. Kurzweil, *Facing the Spiritual Perplexity of Our Time* [Hebrew], (Ramat Gan, 1976), p. 109. In fact, in a letter to M. Friedman, dated March 27, 1954, Buber himself spoke of his "religious anarchy" (M. Buber, *Briefwechsel*, Band 3, [Heidelberg, 1975], p. 643).

43. Cf. E. Simon, *Op. cit.*, p. 29.

of the attitude that is brought along.

To see in the American Jewish counterculture a movement marching in closed ranks towards a certain direction would be to overlook its special qualities. It would be better to compare it to a revolving stage; the individuals and the groups "revolve" for a while, getting to know new things and trying them out for size. In this situation one can always observe processes running in the other direction. Ralph Simon has noted that members of the same Jewish community or school of thought have taken diametrically opposed paths.⁴⁴ When the periodical, *Response*, questioned the "veterans" of the Jewish student movement about changes in their views, many answers made it clear that the counterculture had enabled them to try out a new lifestyle and to abandon earlier positions. The detailed replies of those questioned showed that there is no such thing as a *typical* direction;⁴⁵ it is always a matter of a concrete point of departure and the special circumstances surrounding it.

Paradoxical mixture, revolving stage, experimental communities: these are the catchwords that we need in order to understand Martin Buber's influence on the "New Jews." In short, we cannot imagine the Jewish counterculture in America without Buber's work.

While Buber is thought of as a utopian socialist and an exemplary figure in "infantile socialism" by many contemporary Marxists (and is, therefore, rejected), Jewish socialists and Jewish activists who are committed to Jewish survival needed a powerful figure to rival Marx and Marcuse. They found one in Buber who combined an active spiritual approach to social and political problems with a spiritually active and progressive nuance. This made him a conservative among the radicals but a radical among the Jewishly committed. In that sense, he saved Jewish "souls" from the clutches of atheistic Marxism. Such Jewish radicals were then able to "return home" to Judaism, albeit now as radical Jews. It is an often overlooked legacy that "Reb" Martin Buber saved Jews even though many Jewish traditionalists may not have liked the political and religious direction that he and they took.

44. R. Simon, "Religious Intensity in the Havurah," included in Ahren, *Gemeinschaftsleben als Konstruktionsproblem*, (dissertation, Cologne, 1976), p. 179; see also Yizhak Ahren, "The Experience of Experimental Jewish Communities," in J.N. Porter, ed., *The Sociology of American Jews* (Washington, D.C., 1978), pp. 96-103.

45. "A *Response* Symposium," *Response*, 29 (Spring 1976): 33-86.

Sons Against Their Fathers

MICHAEL D. OPPENHEIM

ERIK ERIKSON, THE FOUNDER OF THE NEW field of psychohistory, has written that "the father-son theme . . . can be found at critical times in the lives of all great innovators as an intrinsic part of their inner transformation."¹ Although Erikson explored this theme in his works on Martin Luther and Mahatma Gandhi, his statement indicates that the father-son theme has importance beyond the lives of these particular individuals. This paper will demonstrate that Erikson's insight into the development of creative innovators provides a new perspective for studying what has been termed the "Jewish post-assimilatory renaissance" in early twentieth century Germany.² The reference is to the significant efforts of groups of young Jews in Germany and Austria to find new roots in their Jewish heritage. The efforts were post-assimilatory, because the point of departure in the quest for authentic Jewish ways of living was the decision not to continue in the direction taken by prior generations of German Jews who sought to appropriate the values and customs of the majority non-Jewish society. The struggle of these young people for meaningful Jewish lives led to a renaissance in Jewish living and thought.

Since this renaissance was as much a rejection of the near past — that is, of their parents' generation — as it was a renewal of contact with more distant times and places, it is not surprising that when the father-son theme arises, it is the son's *rebellion* against the father that is continually expressed. In autobiographical documents as well as in philosophical, historical, and literary works, this theme is omnipresent. A distinctive dimension of this conflict between generations is that it is the father's Judaism which stands out in the son's repudiation of the older generation. The attack on the father's "hollow" Judaism is central both to the son's identity crisis and to his creative *oeuvre*. The son comes to understand who he is or wishes to be only after repudiating the father's way of life. Furthermore, the relationship with the father is an important element in the son's creative process. Franz Kafka, who had tremendous insight into the dynamic between Jewish sons and their fathers, remarked that it is

1. Erik Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1969), pp. 320-1.

2. This expression is discussed in an interview with Gershom Scholem in *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), pp. 1-2.

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from "the father complex . . . [that] more than one Jew draws his spiritual nourishment."³

The revolt of Jewish youth against their parents' generation was not an isolated phenomenon in Europe in the first decade of the twentieth century. Throughout the continent, and especially in Germany, youth were in revolt against what they termed "the bourgeois world." This was a rejection of liberalism, rationalism, and the alienation caused by industrialization. In addition, there was particular hostility directed against the Jews, because the widely accepted stereotypes tied them to these aspects of modernity.⁴

The younger Jewish generation was highly influenced by this new climate of opinion. Many of them accepted the current image of the Jew and "thought they saw it exemplified by their parents."⁵ They tried to escape this image in many ways, including joining socialist and Zionist youth movements. Then, like their non-Jewish counterparts, they participated in a revival of romanticism. For example, there were neo-romantic currents within the Zionist youth movement⁶ and there was a growing interest in Jewish mysticism.

The conflict between generations was particularly acute in the case of some of the leading Jewish figures who were involved in the Jewish post-assimilatory renaissance. In the writings of Franz Rosenzweig, Gershom Scholem, Martin Buber, and Franz Kafka, the same picture of the son's alienation from, and rejection of, the father is dramatically portrayed. The father's way of life seems to be without real meaning. The father is said to have no sensitivity for the more spiritual dimensions of life and his life is seen, therefore, as having no direction or purpose. His mastery of the business world is acknowledged, but this, in turn, leads to the charge that everything which he touches turns into just another business matter. In particular, the father's Judaism is described as ephemeral and superficial, as not a living thing. It is retained only for some sentimental value or because it reinforces the father's view of his social and cultural status.

The historian may question the objectivity of some aspects of this portrait of the father and it would certainly be an error to treat the statements of sons about their fathers as balanced scholarly reports. However, since it is precisely what the sons saw and felt, rather than what actually happened, that is of interest to us, there is no need to "correct" the sons' understanding. Still, the sons' reading of their fathers' view of Judaism is probably not far removed from the way that the fathers saw it

3. This statement by Kafka is quoted in Marthe Robert's book, *From Oedipus to Moses*, trans. by Ralph Mannheim (Garden City, N.Y.: Grosset & Dunlap, 1970), pp. 77-81.

4. George W. Mosse discusses this youth revolt in *Germans and Jews* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1970), pp. 77-81.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

6. See Mosse's chapter, "The Influence of the Volkish Idea on German Jewry," *Op. cit.*, pp. 77-115.

themselves. The older generation felt that they had completed the process that had begun in the eighteenth century with Moses Mendelssohn. They had broken out of the limits of the Jewish ghetto and had become part of the German nation, at least in their own eyes. They still felt themselves to be Jews and they regarded converts to Christianity as traitors. However, it is fair to say that in many cases their self-identity as Jews meant that, more than anything else, they shared middle-class Jewish values and aspirations. The religious and national elements of Judaism were left behind in the same way that the old ghetto was. There were no regrets. Success in the business world led many of these Jews to feel very satisfied with their lot, and the fact that there was little in the way of Judaism to be passed on to the next generation did not seem to be a crucial problem.

Although many different paths were taken by the sons in order to achieve their own integrity, the estrangement from the father was the platform upon which the new way of life was built. Franz Rosenzweig's experiences of the emptiness of his parents' Jewish life forced him to begin his own quest for meaning, a quest that ended with his unique contribution to modern Jewish life. For Gershom Scholem, the "self-deceit" of his father's alliance of Judaism with Germanism brought him to create a new foundation for Judaism from the hidden resources of Jewish mysticism. The particular course of Martin Buber's family life probably precluded him from coming into conflict with his father, but he was fascinated by the idea of the conflict between fathers and sons and he incorporated this theme into his understanding of the dynamics of religious creativity. Franz Kafka attempted to free himself from the crushing weight of his relationship to his father by transforming it into a symbol of modern man's alienation from God and the world.

Finally, there are many features of Sigmund Freud's life and work that differentiate him from those mentioned above, but the constant attention that he gives to the father-son theme certainly merits some place in this study. Freud, who made the Oedipus complex into the central insight of his new science, sheds additional light on the dynamics of the relationship of Jewish sons to their fathers.

Franz Rosenzweig's rejection of the vacuousness of his father's Judaism was the first step in his rediscovery of the vitality and meaningfulness of the Jewish tradition. Rosenzweig, who became one of the most original and influential modern Jewish philosophers, had to establish his own road to Judaism, because he could not find a firm footing in the ways of life of the earlier generation.

Franz's fundamental distance from his father, Georg, stemmed from two sources. In the first place, while Franz was totally involved in the world of ideas, his father was much more practical-minded. This aspect of the relationship between them is underscored in a letter that Franz wrote

to his mother in March, 1918, following his father's funeral and her attempts to smooth over the past obstacles between her husband and her son. Franz would not allow his mother to paint a false picture of his relationship to his father. In commenting upon their estrangement from each other, the son alluded to his father's "lack of direction in his activities."⁷ For his father "everything turned into a 'piece of business,' never into a subject."⁸ There was a fundamental conflict involving the "man possessed of ideas defending himself against the father who grappled indiscriminately with whatever came to hand."⁹ At an earlier time, the temperamental differences between the two emerged when Franz decided to change the focus of his university studies from medicine to history and philosophy. Georg was totally unsympathetic to this decision and even regarded it as an act of desertion.¹⁰

The second source of the rupture was the emptiness that Franz experienced in the religion of his parents. His early views mirror his inability to see any meaning in the Judaism of his childhood and youth. An exchange of letters between him and his parents, precipitated by the decision of one of his cousins to convert to Christianity, clearly reveals Franz's early opinion about his religious heritage. Although his parents were outraged by this conversion, Franz believed that his cousin had made a good decision. His cousin was looking to satisfy a "spiritual hunger" and for Franz it was clear that Judaism was not able to fulfill this role. He writes that Judaism is nothing but "the empty notation in the registrar's office."¹¹ While his parents objected to conversion out of principle, the son held that principle was not a valid reason for choosing an "empty purse" over "a handful of money."¹²

Since Rosenzweig's only contact with Judaism was with the weak variety in his parental home, when he began to feel a spiritual hunger of his own it was to Christianity that he turned. Ultimately, he decided to remain a Jew only after he was at one time forced to leave the synagogue of his parents and chanced upon a small orthodox synagogue on Yom Kippur, October, 1913. It was in this unfamiliar setting that Franz had a powerful religious experience of the living reality of the covenant between God and the Jewish people, and his life was transformed by it.¹³

From October, 1913 on, he began to explore the vast dimensions of a house whose existence he had hardly known about. By dedicating himself to Judaism he turned his back upon a road "flanked by unrealities" and found his real self.¹⁴ At both the philosophical and practical level, he

7. This letter is collected in *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought*, edited by Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1962), p. 69.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-6.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 95-6.

devoted himself to deepening his own and his community's relationship to Judaism. After five years of intensive study, he formulated the uniqueness and the deeply religious character of his return to Judaism. His powerful experience of God's revelation reverberates throughout the work. Rosenzweig intended that this book should demonstrate to the Jews of his generation that Judaism was both a living religious tradition and an authentic source of direction in the modern world. In 1920 he founded, and became the principal of, a Jewish school of adult education, the *Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus* in Frankfurt. Finally, to further his contemporaries' understanding of the sources of Judaism, he translated some of the writings of the medieval poet and philosopher, Judah Halevi, and he worked on a new translation of the Bible in cooperation with Martin Buber.

Rosenzweig's decision not to convert to Christianity did not end the estrangement that he felt from his parents' way of life and, especially, from his father. The letters that he wrote to them after 1913 indicate that his religious feelings and his enthusiasm for an all-encompassing Jewish life was not shared by them. He felt that their identification with Judaism never passed beyond "a sense of pride in belonging to this time-honored, and nowadays quite well-situated, 'sociological stratum.'"¹⁵

In a recent interview, Gershom Scholem, the eminent historian of Jewish mysticism, reflected upon his rejection of his father's empty Judaism and his own search for a vital Jewish life:

The Jewish post-assimilatory renaissance meant a revolt against the life-style of the parents' home or of the circle of families like it. This was a conscious breakaway, a volitional act, a decision. . . . The revolt, or the break — in instances like mine — was against self-deceit. A person living in a liberal-Jewish, German-assimilationist environment had the feeling that those people were devoting their entire lives to self-delusion. . . .

The members of the assimilatory generation angrily rejected the charges of their children. Papa certainly didn't enjoy hearing me tell him he was deceiving himself. This resulted in our total estrangement from each other. When I came home and said, "I think I want to be a Jew," Papa responded by quoting the maxim that was so popular among German Jewry: "Jews are only good for going to synagogue with." When he started talking to me in that vein, I got angry and said, "That's all a lie". . . . In the end, there was nothing we had to say to each other. . . . I wasn't sure yet whether I wanted to be an observant Jew. But a Jew I wanted to be.¹⁶

Scholem's description of his "revolt" is quoted at length because it eloquently voices the manner in which he and many others perceived the way of life of their fathers' generation. When he announced that he wanted to be a Jew, both the son and the father knew that an act of

15. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

16. Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*, pp. 2-4.

rebellion was taking place. The last act in this confrontation took place when, as Gershom relates, his father, in March, 1917, sent him a registered letter ordering him to leave the household.¹⁷

The son knew that he wanted to be a Jew, but he was not certain how he should go about being one. Orthodox Judaism just did not make sense to him, he says.¹⁸ Zionism, but not the form that it took in Germany, was an important part of the answer. Eventually, he also became interested in Jewish mysticism. He recognized that there were still elements of Jewish spiritual life within this forgotten part of the Jewish heritage that could have importance in the present.

For Scholem, Kabbalah represented the culmination of the past great expressions of the Jewish spirit. While he felt that Biblical and Rabbinic Judaism could not withstand the attacks of the modern, secular world, he believed that this tradition of Jewish mysticism could withstand these forces because it focused on the inner man. It gave full rein to the many facets of man's inner life, by indicating through myth and symbols that the divine and the human are not ultimately opposed. It pointed to a divine dimension, to mystery and the sacred, both within the world and within man himself. By consciously using symbols, it had allowed its intuitions of the nature of the spiritual life to remain fluid and alive. According to Scholem, it remained true to the core of Judaism by proclaiming the mystery and sanctity of all of life.¹⁹

In his famous study, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, he indicates the importance that he attaches to this dimension of the Jewish past. He writes:

The particular forms of symbolical thought in which the fundamental attitude of the Kabbalah found its expression, may mean little or nothing to us (though even today we cannot escape, at times, from their powerful appeal). But the attempt to discover the hidden life beneath the external shapes of reality and to make visible that abyss in which the symbolic nature of all that exists reveals itself: this attempt is as important for us today as it was for those ancient mystics. For as long as nature and man are conceived as His creations, and that is the indispensable condition of highly developed religious life, the quest for the hidden life of the transcendent element in such creation will always form one of the most important preoccupations of the human mind.²⁰

Thus, Scholem's study of Kabbalah cannot be properly seen as a mere "academic" interest. He rediscovered Kabbalah after rejecting the barrenness of his father's Judaism. This dynamic of rebellion against the father and the return to Judaism brought him to see the vitality of an area

17. Ibid., p. 15.

18. Ibid., p. 10.

19. Ibid., pp. 17-48. Also see Scholem's article, "Reflections on Jewish Theology," Ibid., pp. 261-297.

20. Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1954), pp. 38-39.

of Jewish life that had been hidden from the prior generation. The alienated young man found a continuity with his Jewish past in the very thing which his father's generation had regarded as the most alien part of a heritage that was, itself, without much value.

The theme of the rebellion of the son against the father is found in Martin Buber's early religious writings, despite the fact that it is entirely missing from his personal history. This seemingly anomalous situation is somewhat clarified by looking into Buber's childhood. Martin's mother and father separated when he was very young and, until the age of fourteen, he lived with his grandparents. He draws very sympathetic pictures of his father as well as of his grandfather, the important Haskalah scholar, Solomon Buber.²¹ In the few reminiscences that we do have, Buber does not speak of his father's relationship to Judaism, but he does show the very strong contact with Jewish life that the grandfather had.

In light of the lack of any antagonism between father and son, at least as far as we know, it is surprising that Buber still draws upon this theme of alienation and rebellion in some of his early speeches about Judaism. He seems to have intuited the very strong feelings toward the fathers by the youth of his generation, especially those who wished to find their way back to Judaism, and he provided a powerful voice for those feelings. In the very influential address of 1913, "Jewish Religiosity," he describes that antagonism:

Thus religiosity is the creative, religion the organizing, principle. Religiosity starts anew with every young person, shaken to his very core by the mystery; religion wants to force him into a system stabilized for all time. . . . Religiosity induces sons, who want to find their own God, to rebel against their fathers; religion induces fathers to reject their sons, who will not let their father's God be forced upon them. Religion means preservation; religiosity, renewal.²²

Someone reading these lines who did not know of the *Kulturkampf* between fathers and sons at the time they were spoken might see only an interesting metaphor here. However, for Buber's contemporaries, they were more than metaphoric truth. Buber suggests that a battle is always being waged between the "fathers" who are stuck in the past and the "sons" who must rebel against that past in order to rediscover the spirit and truth that underlies authentic life.

In other speeches, Buber refers explicitly to the spiritual hollowness of the Judaism of his time and he identifies that manifestation of Judaism with the principle of "religion." For example, in the 1911 address, "Renewal of Judaism," he criticizes those who believe that Judaism can have a

21. Buber's attachment to his grandfather and his approval of the latter's way of life is paralleled by other young Jews of his generation. It seems that grandfathers often exerted the only real Jewish influence in the early life of this young generation who, at times, were able to look past their fathers to the integrity of their grandfathers' religious life.

22. Martin Buber, *On Judaism*, ed. by Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), pp. 80-1.

real future merely by preserving what is currently being lived and thought. He feels that the contemporary Jewish community is so lifeless that Judaism cannot survive without a complete "renewal." By renewal Buber means "something sudden and immense," "a return and a transformation," "a crisis and a shock," that is, nothing less than an "upheaval" in the life of the Jewish community.²³

Buber devoted over half a century of his life to the study and interpretation of Jewish mysticism,²⁴ especially Hasidism, because he felt that it was the key to the future rebirth of a living Judaism. The dialogue between God and the Jewish community was best exemplified within the Hasidic community of the past and "no renewal of Judaism will be possible that will not contain its [Hasidut's] elements."²⁵

Thus, despite Buber's atypical family life, his writings and speeches echo the drama of the son's rejection of the father's Judaism and the son's quest for authentic Jewish life. While one might question whether he is justified in universalizing this alienation and rebellion against the father as a perennial fact of religious life, Buber certainly understood what was occurring at this time.

Franz Kafka's relationship to his father is well known because of the publication of his *Brief an den Vater*, written in 1919. The familiar portrait of the rupture between father and son is vividly sketched in this very long "letter." The intensity of the alienation, as well as its tragic consequences for Franz's life, makes the relationship between father and son almost a caricature of the other somewhat similar situations that we have seen. Kafka begins by saying that even at the age of thirty-six he is afraid of his father.²⁶ He explains this estrangement from his father in terms of the irreconcilability of their temperaments and the gap in experiences between their generations. Franz was over-powered by the self-assurance and self-righteousness of his father, Hermann. While the son was timid and introspective, the father was outgoing and did things in the grand style. In addition, the distance between father and son was increased by their different life situations. Hermann Kafka, like many German Jews, though he and Franz lived in Prague, began as a poor man and eventually emerged as a successful businessman. The self-assurance that comes to one who feels himself to be a self-made man was clearly out of reach for

23. Ibid., p. 35.

24. Buber's interest in Jewish mysticism shows the influence of the neo-romantic rebellion of young people throughout Germany. In fact, he studied such great German mystics as Meister Eckhart and Jacob Boehme before he turned to the phenomenon of Jewish mysticism.

25. This statement by Buber is quoted in Scholem's collection of articles in *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*, pp. 144-5.

26. Franz Kafka, *Letter to His Father*, trans. by Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (New York: Schocken Books, 1970), p. 7.

the son, who could find no outlet in the family business for his passionate literary talents and interests. Franz's quest for a way of life that took him outside of his father's interests brought Hermann to believe that his son was intentionally rebellious and ungrateful.

Kafka thoroughly explores the issue of Judaism in his letter to his father. He could find no meaning in the "insignificant scrap of Judaism" that his father possessed.²⁷ For the father, Judaism was kept somewhat as a sentimental relic of the past; but, of course, the relic could not be passed on to the son, who had no childhood memories to give it some significance. Franz recognized that the quality of his father's attachment to Judaism was representative of a whole generation.

The whole thing is, of course, no isolated phenomenon. It was much the same with a large section of this transitional generation of Jews, which had migrated from the still comparatively devout countryside to the cities.²⁸

Despite the fact that he could thus put his father's Judaism into some historical perspective, it did not help him to find meaning in these scraps of his father's past. To justify the weakness of Judaism in his own life the father was inclined to say that he had "too much work and too many other worries to be able to bother with such things as well."²⁹ Still, in the light of his father's overall attitude toward Judaism, Franz wondered how he could have been expected to "do anything better with that material than get rid of it as fast as possible."³⁰

Franz began to appreciate the vitality of Judaism only when he was exposed to something more than the Judaism of his father's generation. While for many young Jews of his own generation this experience came in the army in the first World War, when they met Polish Jews, for Franz it occurred when he came into contact with a Yiddish theatre group. From the time of his work with them in 1910, he became increasingly interested in Jewish history and Yiddish literature, and in 1918 he began to study Hebrew in an intensive way.

In the "letter," he wrote that he expected that his new involvement with Judaism would bring him and his father closer together. Yet, his father was "nauseated" by the Jewish writings that Franz brought home and, in the end, the son believed that "through my intervention Judaism became abhorrent to you."³¹ Franz saw these exaggerated reactions as Hermann's acknowledgement of the "weakness" of both his own Judaism and of Franz's religious upbringing.

Kafka's rebellion against his father and his rejection of his father's Judaism did not lead, as it did with Rosenzweig and Scholem, to the recovery of one of the past sources of the Jewish tradition. In his quest for

27. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 81-83.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

authenticity, the role of Judaism is not as unambiguously clear or as positive as we have seen it to be in the case of others. It was his *Jewishness*, that is, his condition of being a modern Jew, rather than the particular heritage of the past, that provided a foundation for his great creative works. Kafka's literary power stems in part from his ability to poetize or universalize his relationship to his father and his alienation from the world as a modern Jew. He saw that his experiences were more than his own. His life situation was unique and at the same time paradigmatic of the lives of all modern individuals. Just as he was almost crushed by the powerful, unloving, and arbitrary will of his father, so he wrote of heroes who struggle with these same dimensions of the human condition.

Kafka was aware that his relationship to his father and to his father's Judaism was one of the sources of his creativity. In a letter to a friend, he reflected upon the link between creativity and the experience of being sons of Jewish fathers. In commenting on what appealed to him in a book that he had just finished reading, he said that

the observation that the father complex from which more than one Jew draws his spiritual nourishment relates not to the innocent father but to the father's Judaism. What most of those who began to write in German wanted was to break with Judaism, generally with the vague approval of their fathers (this vagueness is the revolting part of it). That is what they wanted, but their hind legs were bogged down in their fathers' Judaism, and their front legs could find no new ground. The resulting despair was their inspiration.³²

The respective influences of Kafka's relationship to his father and his own Jewishness are quite profound in the short story, "The Judgment," and in *The Castle*. The autobiographical quality of the story, written in 1912, was confirmed by both Franz and his sister.³³ In it, an atmosphere of fear and absurdity pervades the confrontation between father and son. In the single scene that is recorded, the father takes over the son's world and leaves him with nothing of his own. At the end, the father's words, "I sentence you now to death by drowning," are carried out by the son.³⁴

The modern Jew's feeling of being an unwelcome stranger in the world is vividly portrayed by Kafka in *The Castle*. The author's pictorial representation of the Jew's estrangement from other people has been noted by many literary critics, despite the fact that the word "Jew" does not appear in the book. Although the hero, K., believes that he has been hired to do some work in a small village, he finds himself a stranger and an alien intruder wherever he goes.

Thus, one source of Franz Kafka's literary power was also the source

32. See footnote # 3.

33. See statements by Franz Kafka and his sister in *I Am a Memory Come Alive: Autobiographical Writings by Franz Kafka*, ed. by Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), pp. 53, 75-76.

34. Franz Kafka, "The Judgment," in *The Penal Colony*, trans. by Willa and Edwin Muir (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 63.

of his own personal impotence. In both cases he was not able to escape the burden of his relationship to his father and his father's religious tradition. The paradoxicalness and, also, the heroism of Kafka's position is illuminated by a statement that was made in a conversation that he had with Max Brod, his friend and future biographer. In commenting about his failures in getting married, Kafka said:

What I have to do, I can do only alone. Become clear about the ultimate things. The Western Jew is not clear about them, and therefore has no right to marry. There are no marriages for them. Unless he is the kind that is not interested in such things — business men for example.³⁵

In Sigmund Freud's personal reflections and in his writings on religion one again comes upon the theme of the rebellion of the son against the father. While it is impossible within the confines of this paper to treat the whole complex and controversial matter of Freud's Judaism, it is valuable to conclude our line of investigation with this great figure. We will find that, as with Kafka, one of the sources of his insight and creativity was his situation as a Jewish son. His Jewishness, rather than any positive relationship to the contents of the Jewish past, brought him to see hitherto unobserved elements of man's inner life.

Freud was born three decades before most of the other thinkers whom we have encountered, and the process of assimilation was not so far along with his father, Jacob, as it was with the other fathers in this study. Jacob was not Orthodox, but he was an active member of a moderate Reform Jewish community. He studied the Bible and the Talmud extensively and still retained a living religious faith. Sigmund, himself, had a fairly strong Jewish education, but during his student years he became an agnostic and only very grudgingly went along with the celebration of Jewish festivals in his father's house.³⁶

The link between Freud's situation of being a rebellious Jewish son and his creative work in the field of psychoanalysis can be disclosed by looking into his somewhat autobiographical book, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, a work which was begun in response to his father's death.³⁷ After the funeral, Sigmund began to be haunted by dreams that he could not understand. He found it extremely difficult to find their meaning, but he felt that they contained some well hidden feelings and thoughts that had to be uncovered.

35. This statement by Kafka is cited in Brod's *Franz Kafka: A Biography*, p. 166.

36. See the reconstruction of the religious life of Freud's father in the chapter "The Judaism of Freud's Family," in Reuben M. Rainey, *Freud as Student of Religion* (Missoula, Montana: American Academy of Religion and Scholars Press, 1975), pp. 9-33.

37. See the "Preface to the Second Edition" of Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. by James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1968), p. xxvi. Freud writes that the book was "a portion of my own self-analysis, my reaction to my father's death — that is to say, to the most important event, the most poignant loss, of a man's life."

Among the central dreams that are recorded in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, there are recurring references to Jacob. Sigmund found that two features of his father's way of life, both tied to Jacob's Jewishness, caused him much resentment. Eventually, he understood that lurking beneath the manifest content of his dreams was a criticism of his father's lack of appreciation for Western culture and his resigned submission to a personal anti-Semitic attack. Hostility toward these two features of his father's Jewishness was at the roots of his latent feelings of hatred and rebelliousness toward his father. He concluded that his "rebellion against [his] father" lay at the heart of many of the dreams that had first brought him to explore the unconscious recesses of his mind.³⁸ This conclusion led him, in turn, to hypothesize that the son's rebellion against the father was a perennial feature of the life of man.

It was through Freud's analysis of his dreams and of his repressed hatred toward his father that he came to understand the universal phenomenon that he called the Oedipus complex. In fact, in some early letters he referred to the Oedipus complex — that is, the infant's desire for the parent of the opposite sex and the hatred of the other parent as a rival to be eliminated — as the *Vatercomplex*.³⁹

The theme of the rebellion of the son against the father is not by any means limited to Freud's book on dreams or to his psychoanalytic theories. His books on religion and Judaism, *Totem and Taboo* and *Moses and Monotheism*, try to provide historical and psychological support for his controversial theory that the origins of religion in general, and Judaism in particular, lay in the revolt of the sons against the father and the eventual murder of the father by the sons.


Although Freud is not part of the German post-assimilatory renaissance and cannot be completely identified with the constellation of figures that we have explored earlier, he also cannot be dismissed or ignored. He shows the hostility to his father's Judaism or Jewishness that we have come to expect in some creative young men whose birth followed his by a few decades. Like Kafka, Freud was not able to identify with Judaism as a religious tradition. Yet, his life as a Jewish son was one of the sources of his startling insights into the nature of man.

The theme of the rebellion of the son against the father is not unique to this period of time or to the particular individuals in our study. As many students of history have known, creative young men often need to renounce their culture and their actual fathers in order to clear the way for their own genius to construct a new world. The tension or antagonism between father and son that Freud designated as the "Oedipus complex" seems to be accentuated in the lives of most great innovators. Thus, the purpose of calling attention to the conflict between Jewish sons and their

38. For example, see the interpretation of one of Freud's dreams in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 251.

39. Robert, *From Oedipus to Moses*, p. 208.

fathers in early twentieth century Germany was not to suggest that this was some kind of novel occurrence. Rather, this study has attempted to provide new insight into this important period in Jewish history by highlighting the dynamic relationship between the struggle for identity by some gifted young men and the creative offerings that they were able to fashion for others of their time. The figure of the father, we have found, colored in a powerful way both the identity quest and the creative process. The son's relationship to the father, and especially to the father's Judaism, became one of the foundations upon which men as different as Franz Rosenzweig, Gershom Scholem, Martin Buber, Franz Kafka, and Sigmund Freud were able to present their creations to the world.



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Life History Data in the Bible, from Abraham to Joshua

MICHAEL L. ROSENZWEIG

Abraham threw himself on his face and laughed as he said to himself "Can a child be born to a man 100 years old, or can Sarah bear a child at 90?"
Genesis 17:17

POPULATION BIOLOGISTS HAVE COME TO expect certain patterns in the ages at which people in primitive societies reproduce and die. These expectations are not fulfilled by the Bible, at least not by the ages which it reports as occurring before the time of King Saul. Is that because these earlier parts of the Bible are inaccurate legends first written down in the times of the Judaeen monarchy?¹ Is it because of errors in transcription? Or is it because, during earliest Biblical history, people were not subject to the same living conditions or constitutional frailties as we are today?

Although Biblical life history information does not conform to the *expected* pattern, it is not *devoid* of one. Let us first search for pattern in the information about the lives of those who lived from Abraham's days to Joshua's. This segment of time spans the bulk of the Torah plus the entire book of Joshua, and it is of the greatest historical and religious importance to Judaism.

What we need are the personal data.² When does an individual marry, have a child, assume certain responsibilities, make important decisions, pass biographical milestones and, finally, die?

The result of searching the Bible for ages at marriage, birth of first son, and death is Table 1.³ Two trends appear in this table. First, people were reported to have lived much, much longer than they do now. Second, people delayed marrying and having children at least until their thirties and often until their forties. Only Joseph is said to have married as early as thirty.

1. This hypothesis is defended by John Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975) p. 335.

2. Calendar information relating to holiday celebrations will be seen to contradict the hypothesis of this paper because, for example, Tishrei is mentioned as the seventh month. But such information is not really relevant to this discussion because it had to be updated to provide accurate guidance after the calendar changed. "The Torah speaks in the language of men" (*Sifre Num.*).

3. Table 1 is compiled from: Gen. 12:4; 16:3; 17:18; 23:1; 25:17, 20, 26; 26:34; 27:46; 29:20; 35:28; 41:50; 47:28; 50:26; Exod. 6:16, 18, 20; Num. 33:39; Deut. 34:7; Josh. 24:29.

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TABLE 1

Some Biblical life history data. The age in the first column is the one given for age at birth of first son. (For Esau and Jacob, where only marriage age is recorded, this is given as "marriage age +.") The second column is age at death.

| <i>Person</i> | <i>1st birth</i> | <i>Death</i> |
|---------------|------------------|--------------|
| Abraham | 86 | 175 |
| Sarah | 90 | 127 |
| Ishmael | — | 137 |
| Isaac | 60 | 180 |
| Esau | 40+ | — |
| Jacob | 47+ | 147 |
| Levi | — | 137 |
| Joseph | 31-36 | 110 |
| Kohath | — | 133 |
| Amram | — | 137 |
| Aaron | — | 123 |
| Moses | — | 120 |
| Joshua | — | 110 |

Most of these people were, after all, God's special charges, so it is possible for a believer to accept their long lifespans. But it is more difficult to understand their delay of marriage and reproduction. Paleontologists can tell (from the molar tooth-wear patterns of fossils) that hominid sexual maturity has been arriving in the middle teens for some fifteen millions years.⁴ And it has been calculated⁵ that initial reproduction of females in primitive societies must have occurred at about age twelve. Were early Jews sexually deprived? Was there anything in their culture that caused or allowed them to delay having babies for so long?

Since the potato famine in the mid-nineteenth century, the Irish have delayed marriage into their late thirties, but that was a result of extreme poverty.^{6,7} By contrast, the Torah tells us that our forefathers were gentry

4. Michael L. Rosenzweig, *And Replenish the Earth* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), pp. 109, 110.

5. Ronald A. Fisher, *The Genetical Theory of Natural Selection*, rev. ed., (New York: Dover, 1958), pp. 28, 29.

6. Rosenzweig, *Op. cit.*, pp. 71, 72.

7. Another society said to delay marriage is less well-documented than the Irish. These are the Abkhasians of the Caucasian mountains. They are also said to have unusually long lifespans, often surviving beyond 100 years. However, the data on the former point are sparse and suspect because of poor records. Abkhasians do not celebrate birthdays. And the data on the latter point have the same problems plus the added one that because extreme age confers many privileges in Abkhasia, people are encouraged to falsify their attainments. In

with many wives and concubines, substantial herds of cattle, and the military capacity to influence the foreign and domestic policies of their times. Surely they did not *need* to delay marriage and children. Moreover, I know of no custom or tradition uncovered by archaeologists which would explain why they should have *elected* to delay.

Table 1 itself suggests a simple, credible alternative. It suggests that where life history data is concerned, we should read "year" as "half-year." If so, Moses died at age 60, and Isaac was born to Sarah when she was 45. Most firstborns were arriving in the early adulthood of their parents and no one was living to ages beyond common experience. This change converts a difficult set of numbers into one which greatly augments and illumines the Biblical narrative.⁸

But this is an arbitrary change. Is there any evidence, external to Table 1, that such a change is reasonable? I believe there is.

When Moses faces Pharaoh, he does not say, "Free my people." He says, "Let my people go to celebrate a festival (*hag*) in God's honor in the wilderness" (Exodus 5:1). Scholars have, in fact, determined that even *then* Jews celebrated two *haggim* per year.⁹ These occurred at six month intervals and have come down to us as Pesah and Succot. These two holidays are held on the full moons just after the two annual equinoxes. Furthermore, *both* months in which they occur (Nisan and Tishrei) commence the year according to Jewish tradition.¹⁰ The overriding importance of these two holidays is underscored by the fact that they are the only holidays mentioned in the Bible outside the Torah.¹¹ Rosh Hashanah and

searching for hard data on the Abkhazians, I found only the following very small sample of 8 male ages at first marriage: 22, 23, 30, 30, 37, 40, 60 and 60. Moreover, these are not a random sampling, but were garnered from old men with the *purpose* of illustrating the custom of late marriage. Students of Abkhazia agree that, currently, the average marriage age for men is somewhere in the 20's. Regarding lifespan, the claims that this is a long-lived people seem simply false. For example, in 1939 only 0.8% of the Abkhazian population was over 60; by 1970 this had increased to 12%. But the U.S. has a similar proportion. In general, although Abkhazians who are 90 or 100 years old seem to abound, the supply of 60, 70 and 80-year-olds is short; this also suggests exaggeration. (Although its conclusions are mine, this note is based upon: Sula Benet, *Abkhazians*, [New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974], pp. 14, 15, 72, 79, 86; Sula Benet, *How To Live To Be 100* [New York: Dial Press, 1976], pp. 10, 45, 47, 118; Alexander Leaf, *Youth in Old Age* [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975], pp. 13, 19, 130.).

8. Life history data preceding Abraham's biography (Gen. 5:3-32; 9:28-29; 11:10-26) would seem, at first glance, not much clarified by reading *shanah* as half-year. In fact, it is correct that any explanation of these data which is *limited* to this change is mostly a failure. However, there is pattern in these data too, and it is possible to explain them, as I shall show in a future article. It turns out that reasonable explanations of these data also require that *shanah* mean half-year. But they require other elements as well. They require an understanding of the multiplicity of cuneiform numeral systems and the ease with which they may be mistaken for one another. And they require an examination of the ambiguity of the place of a cuneiform numeral, an ambiguity which is the inevitable result of the absence in these systems of a symbol for zero.

9. J.B. Segal, *The Hebrew Passover* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 43-46, 184.

10. Mishnah *Rosh Hashana*, 1; Segal, *Op. cit.*, Ch. 4.

11. R. Gordis, personal comment.

Yom Kippur are spiritual spinoffs of Succot (and are still bound up together with it by liturgy, by custom and by halakhah). Shavuot is a spinoff of Pesah, and its date cannot even be determined in the absence of Pesah.

The finely balanced equality between the two major Jewish holiday seasons seems to be one of the most enduring features of Jewish ritual. Even in our times, these seasons have continued to compete with each other for preeminence in the hearts of the Jewish people. There never has been a clear result. First one, then the other seems to achieve it. In America today, Pesah seems preeminent. But when I was a child, my parents and their generation seemed to feel this way about Yom Kippur. In Soviet Russia, Simḥat Torah (the ninth day of Succot) is the unquestioned centerpiece of the Jewish year. And in the generation of American Jews now maturing, I sense a rebirth of the total joy of Succot. The importance of the *two halves* of the year to Judaic civilization has traveled undiminished through the several millenia since the birth of Judaism.

The current word for year in Hebrew is *shanah*. It comes from a Semitic root which signifies "two." For example, the Hebrew for second is *sheynee* (m.) or *sheynit* (S.). And *shoneh*, which means "repeat," derives from the sense that one thing happens a second time. The root is found in other Semitic tongues. For example, in Akkadian the word for two is *šina*.¹² All this suggests that it is logical for *shanah* to have been used initially to signify a period of time of which there were two per year, that is, a half-year.

From our narrow cultural perspective, we are not prepared to expect reckonings in half-years. But there is nothing anthropologically extraordinary about reckoning systems which differ from, or are not restricted to, days, months and years as their principal units. For example, the ancient Egyptians (Dynasties II through VI) recorded many events as to "occasion"; this unit of time was two years long and marked the interval between censuses.¹³ Moreover, to this day, the Zuni tribe of Pueblo Indians in New Mexico uses a six-month calendar¹⁴ just the way I suppose the ancient Jews did.

If this supposition is accurate, it means that the roots of the Torah strike very deeply into the past. Careful records must have been kept even in Abraham's time. And why not? Abraham may have preceded the *alephbet*, but he did not precede writing. And he must have needed a scribe to help him keep accounts of his wealth. I suggest that the historicity of the patriarchal and post-patriarchal narrative is supported by the puzzling pattern of Table 1 and its probable explanation. Why invent such a

12. R. Labat, *Manuel d'épigraphie Akkadien*, 5^e ed., (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1976).

13. R.A. Parker, "The Calendars of Ancient Egypt," *Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization*, 26 (1950).

14. Elsie C. Parsons, *Pueblo Indian Religion* (2 vols.) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), p. 44.

puzzle? Is it not more reasonable to conclude that during the time of the founding of the First Monarchy, which followed a century or two of disorganization and virtual dark ages during the period of the Judges, befuddled scribes simply copied the data as given, unaware of the great change in meaning which had occurred to the word *shanah*?

What I am postulating is not that the Torah is inaccurate. Quite the opposite. I am suggesting that the Torah's life history data need to be taken most seriously. To do that, one need only recognize that we have probably encountered scribal lapse. What is written has been thought to read "year," but should be read "half-year." Let us now examine the significance of such an understanding in reading the Bible.

Moses is understood to be a man of 40 years (not 80) when he leads the Hebrew people into nationhood (Exodus 7:7). Abraham is 37 (not 75) when he relocates to Canaan (Genesis 12:4). Joseph is 8 (not 17) when he first becomes an assistant shepherd (Genesis 37:2). Are not these ages easier to fit into the general tapestry of human life with which we are familiar?

When Joseph is appointed assistant to the Pharaoh, he is said to be 30 years old (Genesis 41:46). Is 15 better? Hardly. Moreover, the Joseph story would now require him to have been appointed chief of Potiphar's household at age 14¹⁵ (Genesis 39:5; 41:1, 46). Perhaps we have exaggerated Potiphar's importance and the size of his household. However, that Potiphar's wife was sexually attracted to a youth of 13 or 14 and that she made aggressive overtures toward him (Genesis 39:7-12) seems much easier to understand than the current reading. (Why would a 27 or 28-year-old be so terrified as not to reclaim his garment? Is it not a fairly common extreme of human sexual behavior for an adult to be attracted to the idea of initiating a youth?)

The light cast by reading *shanah* as half-year focusses most intensely on the story of the birth of Isaac. There are many problems with the narrative as it now stands. Sarah waits until she is 75 to relinquish the idea of ever having children (Genesis 16:2,3). Abraham is then 85, but the Torah informs us in only an unruffled, matter-of-fact tone that he then

15. This portion of the Joseph story is only slightly less credible if *shanah* means half-year. But the record of Leah's seven pregnancies and deliveries in the first thirteen half-years of her marriage (Genesis 29: 31-30:25; 31:41) is simply incredible, especially since she is reported to have had a barren period between the births of Judah and Issachar. There are various ways to consider this problem.

Dr. Robert Gordis (in litt.) points out that while the speech in which Genesis 31:38 and 41 are embedded is poetical in style and in meter, 29:31-30:24 is not. This suggests different origins for the two and may account for the discrepancy. In fact, were it not for Genesis 30:25, there would be no problem. This verse is clearly a literary bridge. Perhaps it is merely a gloss added later in error to provide a smooth transition between the history of the birth of Jacob's sons and the story of Jacob's departure from Haran.

Of course, it is also possible that the hypothesis of this article is false, or that it is true and that Leah really did bear her sons so quickly. But, in the latter case, it would also have to be true that the Torah has taken no notice of one of the most spectacular miracles that it has recorded.

impregnated Hagar. Later, when he is 99 and is promised Isaac, the Torah not only makes a fuss about Sarah's age, but about Abraham's (Genesis 17:17).

By dividing numbers in half, we arrive at the following. Sarah gives up at 37. Abraham is 43 when Ishma'el is born. When Sarah is 44, we are told that she is no longer menstruating (Genesis 18:11) but becomes pregnant, and bears Isaac at 45. Such a conception during menopause may not be ordinary, but it is also not going to make medical history. An added point: if Sarah had been 90, would we really need to have been told of her menopause?

If the life history data in the Torah is really an historical record, it is an interesting exercise to use the Torah to estimate the actual chronology of the events it records. It is generally believed, on the basis of archaeological evidence, that Hazor fell to Joshua about 1240 BCE (plus or minus 10 years).¹⁶ The Rabbis have traditionally calculated that the period when Israel was actually in Egypt lasted 210 years.¹⁷ Along with the 40-year exile in the desert, this means that from the descent into Egypt until the conquest of Canaan about 250/2 or 125 years elapsed. Working backwards, we eventually conclude that Abraham was born toward the end of the 16th century BCE.

This chronology places Joseph in the time of Pharaoh Ikhnaton, the monotheistic revolutionary. The story of Joseph is impressive because of its detail. If it is just a legend, why that wealth of detail, some hardly comprehensible or complimentary to Jews? For example, we are told that the Egyptians found it repulsive to dine with Hebrews (Genesis 43:32). We are informed of an incomprehensible salutation with which the people greeted Joseph (Genesis 41:43). We are given an Egyptian name for Joseph which makes no sense in Hebrew, but is, indeed, Egyptian (Genesis 41:45).

Ikhnaton is supposed to have completely taken over and centralized the economy of Egypt.¹⁸ Does this reflect the Biblical account of Joseph's doing exactly thus for the Pharaoh?¹⁹ No other Pharaoh is suspected of this action. It was unprecedented and Ikhnaton was hated for it. In return for his actions, he was called "that robber of Akhetaten," and soon after his death a systematic attempt was made to destroy any memory of him. The attempt was so thorough that it succeeded for 3000 years.

Ikhnaton's influence on Judaism has long been a subject for specula-

16. Yigael Yadin, *Hazor* (London and Jerusalem: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975), p. 145.

17. Joseph H. Hertz, ed., *Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, 2nd ed. (London: Soncino Press, 1975), p. 259.

18. F.J. Giles, *Ikhnaton, Legend and History* (London: Hutchinson, 1970), p. 135; *Cambridge Ancient History* II (part 2), pp. 52, 53.

19. Genesis 47:14-26. N.B. The obscure verb of verse 21 becomes clear if we imagine that a *resh* has taken the place of a *dalet* in it. (These two letters have always been similar, even in ancient Hebrew.) Then the verb reads "employ" or "set to work," and fits both the Biblical and Egyptological contexts.

tion.²⁰ And the parallels between the mysterious Pharaoh's partially reconstructed reign, and the Joseph story of the Torah reinforce confidence in the antiquity of the Torah as a written record and in the conclusion that, at least from Abraham's time to the time of Joshua, Hebrews probably kept track of their lives in periods of six months called *shanim*.

20. Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism* tr. K. Jones (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 178; Robert Silverberg, *Akhnaten, the Rebel Pharaoh* (Philadelphia: Chilton Books, 1964), pp. 192, 193; Joy Collier, *King Sun, In Search of Akhenaten* (London: Ward Lock Ltd., 1970).

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THE CLASSICIST WHO MAKES A SPECIAL STUDY of Greco-Roman medical literature is assured by the histories of ancient medicine that the art of healing before the nineteenth century reached its highest point among the Greeks of the fifth century B.C.E. It was the achievement of Hippocrates and his medical school on the island of Cos, one reads in such histories, to have effected that divorce, between metaphysics and magic on the one hand and rational observation on the other, which was essential to the development of medicine into a science.¹ Scarcely a branch of medical science as it was understood in antiquity was left untreated in the seventy-three volumes of the Hippocratic Corpus: anatomy, physiology, gynecology, pathology, dietary science, surgery, and obstetrics are represented in one or another of the treatises in the collection. Hippocratic science excelled especially in those branches of medicine where observation by the naked eye came most into play, in particular anatomy and diagnosis. The Hippocratic Corpus reveals an astonishing grasp of surface anatomy, of the working of bodily joints, of the pathology of flesh wounds, and of the daily progress of illness. On the other hand, Hippocratic science was less successful in internal medicine. When direct observation was impossible or was inadequate for the explanation of a disease, the Hippocratic physician was likely to posit as the cause an imbalance of the four bodily humors, an explanation seemingly based upon observation of the functioning of the body. In fact, it represented a concession to the Greek penchant for abstract speculation at the expense of experiment. Indeed, this tendency to prefer theory to experiment plagued Greek science in all periods.

One document of paramount importance in the history of ancient medicine, the Talmud, remains for most classicists and, indeed, for most non-Jews in all disciplines, virtually a closed book. Yet it has a strong claim on the attention of the student of Greek medicine, for the medical researches of the Talmudic rabbis in some respects far surpass the extent of

1. A typical expression of this conception of the achievement of the Hippocratic physicians is that by Benjamin Farrington, *Science in Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 52: "We find in their writings a clear conception of medicine as based on observation of the behavior of the human body in health and in disease, on experiment, and recording of results."

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knowledge demonstrated in even the best of Greek medicine. This paper seeks to discuss some of the chief medical advances of the Talmud in the areas of pathology, anatomy and physiology, and medical ethics in their relation to Greco-Roman medical theory.²

The medical achievement of the Talmudic rabbis is all the more remarkable because it was incidental to the main interests of the authors of the Talmud. Medical matters are covered only when they help to shed light on religious concerns, in particular on ceremonial and legal points. In the attempt to establish the ritual cleanness or uncleanness of the menstruant, for example, the rabbis had occasion to examine menstrual discharges, thereby adding to their understanding of female anatomy and physiology. The tractate *Niddah* in the order *Tohorot* is devoted entirely to such questions. The medical lore of the Talmud, however, is in large part scattered here and there throughout the work. Nor is this the only difficulty encountered in studying the Talmud as a medical document. Because it is the cumulative work of centuries, one is hard pressed to assign a date to any piece of medical doctrine presented in it or to establish the author of any particular theory. It is much more difficult to speak of progress in Jewish medical knowledge as reflected in the Talmud than in Greek medical theory from Hippocrates to Galen (ca. 129-199 C.E.).

The Talmud does not mark the first appearance of the Jews in medical history. Even in Biblical times the Jews distinguished themselves from other ancient nations in their medical theory. Whereas other Near Eastern nations believed in numerous gods, any one of whom could cause a helpless mortal to fall ill, the monotheism of the Jews made sickness and health a less bewildering affair. In order to prevent illness, the Sumerian or Egyptian had to know spells to direct to each of the many deities capable of causing disease. Unfortunately, propitiating one divinity could result in angering another and thereby causing the angry god to send an illness. For the Jew, on the other hand, the God of Israel was the one source of health and sickness, as the Lord declares in Deuteronomy 32:29,

2. The literature on the medical lore in the Talmud is extremely rich. The central work on the subject remains the monumental volume of Julius Preuss, *Biblisch-talmudische Medizin: Beiträge zur Geschichte der Heilkunde und der Kultur* (Berlin: Karger, 1921). Preuss' work has recently been translated into English by Fred Rosner under the title *Biblical and Talmudic Medicine* (New York: Sanhedrin Press, 1978). Although all aspects of medicine, healing, and disease as they appear in Biblical and Talmudic literature are treated in Preuss, the work makes little attempt to assess the contribution made by the Jews to medicine. A more general yet sympathetic treatment of the subject is by Solomon R. Kagan, *Jewish Medicine* (Boston: Medico-Historical Press, 1952). Joshua Leibowitz, *Some Aspects of Biblical and Talmudic Medicine* (Jerusalem: Hadassah Apprentice School of Printing, 1969), although selective and sketchy, offers an interesting coverage of sexual matters, obstetrics, neurology, and forensic medicine in the Talmud, with full documentation. Also valuable and highly readable is J. Snowman, *A Short History of Talmudic Medicine* (New York: Hermon Press, 1974; reprint of the edition of 1935). A drawback of Snowman's volume is the absence of references to the Talmudic texts under discussion. A fine treatment of Talmudic medical ethics is by Immanuel Jakobovits, *Jewish Medical Ethics: A Comparative and Historical Study of the Jewish Religious Attitude to Medicine and its Practice* (New York: Bloch, 1959).

"See now that I, I am He, and there is no god beside me: I put to death and I keep alive, I wound and I heal; there is no rescue from my grasp." For the Biblical Jew, spiritual and physical cleanliness were identical. Strict observance of hygienic regulations was a form of worship. It is no coincidence that since, in the Biblical view, healing is theurgic, references to doctors and drugs are relatively scarce.

The medical interests of the Talmudic rabbis are infinitely more complex and far-reaching than those of the Jews of Biblical times, and only with the formulation of the Talmud can one speak of a Jewish medical science. Perhaps the most impressive achievement of Talmudic medicine for the student of Hippocratic and Galenic science is rabbinic pathology. It is no exaggeration to state that the Talmudists invented the science of pathology, a direct consequence of the need to examine slaughtered animals that were to be used for food. In accordance with the prescriptions of Leviticus 11, it was necessary to be sure that the meat was not diseased. In the mishnah of tractate *Hullin* there is a list of eighteen defects which render cattle unfit for consumption. By inserting a tube into the trachea and inflating the lungs, the rabbis were able to detect adhesions, dislocations, and other malformations in animal lungs which might render the meat unfit. In the course of such investigations, the Talmudists made the remarkable discovery that disease may be associated not only with morphological changes in tissues, but may manifest itself in functional abnormalities and external symptoms. The Hippocratic physician observed no connection between external symptoms and morbid alteration of tissue appearance. For the Greek doctor, disease was simply the result of a condition termed *plethora* by the Hippocratic school, that is, an excess of one or more of the four bodily humors isolated by the Hippocratics, namely black bile, yellow bile, blood, and phlegm. Health is defined by the Hippocratic physician as a proper balance of these humors. An external circumstance, like a fall or even a sudden change in the weather, can cause a humor to rarefy or condense, rushing to a particular part of the body and rendering it diseased.³ Ironically, the Hippocratic theory of humoral imbalance became the accepted explanation for the origin of disease in the Middle Ages, while the sound Talmudic pathological anatomy had no influence on medieval medicine.

One further achievement of rabbinic pathology deserves mention here. What appears to be the earliest extant discussion of hemophilia is

3. This doctrine is stated in the Hippocratic treatise, *Nature of man*, 29, in *Works of Hippocrates, with an English Translation*, ed. and tr. by W.H.S. Jones (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), IV, pp. 11-13: "The body of man has in itself blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile; these make up the nature of his body, and through these he feels pain and enjoys health. Now he enjoys the most perfect health when these elements are duly proportioned to one another in respect to compounding, power and bulk, and when they are perfectly mingled. Pain is felt when one of these elements is in defect or excess, or is isolated in the body without being compounded with all the others." The Hippocratic treatise entitled *Humors* is a misnomer, for, in fact, it scarcely deals with the humors at all.

found in the tractate *Yevamot*, dealing with levirate marriages as these are set forth in Deuteronomy 25: 5-10.⁴ In the case of hemophilia, the Talmudic rabbis allow even so holy a rite as circumcision to be omitted if it is necessary to save the child's life. In *Yevamot*, Rabbi Judah states that if two male children of a mother have died as a result of bleeding following circumcision, the third male child of that mother is not to be circumcised. Rabbi Simeon ben Gamaliel states, however, that the mother must submit three children to circumcision but not a fourth under such circumstances.⁵ Underlying the debate of the two rabbis is a clear recognition of the role of inheritance in disease.⁶

A number of specific diseases are described in the Hippocratic Corpus. Colds, plague, consumption, dysentery, typhoid, and several varieties of malaria and fever can be identified with more or less certainty.⁷ Since the isolation and description of symptoms of disease was one of the strong points of Hippocratic medicine, the fact that hemophilia is nowhere mentioned in the Corpus suggests that its authors either never encountered a case or did not recognize it as a distinct malady.

The eagerness of the rabbis to acquire medical knowledge, even if it was not immediately applicable to questions of religious law, is apparent from their willingness to derive this information from rather curious sources. The tractate *Bekhorot* recounts the interesting story that the students of Rabbi Ishmael dissected the corpse of a prostitute who had been executed by the civil authorities. Since dissection was interpreted by the Talmudic rabbis as a violation of the Jewish prohibition against mutilating the dead,⁸ it is likely that the prostitute in question was a heathen. In any case, the disciples of the rabbi used the opportunity to count the number of bones in the human body.⁹

An investigation like that carried out by the pupils of Rabbi Ishmael suggests an inquisitiveness of mind and attention to detail matching that of Hippocrates and his school. Indeed, the anatomical and physiological doctrine in the Talmud is no less significant than is its pathology. One area of anatomical and physiological inquiry, the mechanism of reproduction in the human female, proved an especially difficult problem for ancient

4. It is interesting to note that Jakobovits (see above, note 2), p. 199, states that the first clinical description of hemophilia apparently dates to 1784.

5. *Yevamot* 64b.

6. On the same grounds, Raba forbids a man to marry a wife from a family having epileptic members (*Yevamot* 64b).

7. The Hippocratic treatises, *Epidemics* I-III and *The Sacred Disease*, discuss the symptoms of diseases. One might have expected a treatment of hemophilia in the treatise *On Fractures* if the Hippocratic physicians had encountered the disease.

8. The Greeks shared this prohibition on the belief that the dead still retain some vestige of feeling. This taboo abated only briefly in the Hellenistic period when Herophilus of Chalcedon, in the third century B.C.E., performed dissections in the intellectually free atmosphere of the court of Ptolemy II Philadelphus.

9. *Bekhorot* 45a. The question of the number of bones in the human body was a matter of some difficulty to physicians of all ancient nations. The disciples of Rabbi Ishmael were uncertain as to whether the total should be placed at 248 or 252.

physicians of all nations. Questions of female anatomy and reproduction are dealt with in some detail in the tractate *Niddah*, and in these matters the Talmudic rabbis show evidence of familiarity with Greek medical thinking. It was only in the time of Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) that the Greeks began to make real progress in the area of reproductive anatomy and physiology. The rabbis taught, as had Aristotle in *On the Generation of Animals*,¹⁰ that both parents produce semen. If the male releases his seed first during intercourse, the child will be male, and vice versa.

In the area of female reproduction, the Talmudic rabbis can have learned little from the Hippocratic writings. No treatise in the *Corpus* deals with female reproductive anatomy, nor is there any evidence in the collection of first hand observation of dissected female organs. Attempts to cure illnesses of the vagina, of course, provided some knowledge of female anatomy, but there is no understanding of ovaries, of Fallopian tubes, or of the physiology of menstruation. Although the Hippocratic writings give evidence of acquaintance with almost all female disorders recognized today, the Hippocratic physicians seem to have had considerable difficulty in explaining them. They appear to have realized this deficiency themselves, and apologized for it by claiming that female patients are the most difficult to treat because of their unwillingness to discuss their problems with a male physician. This led females to consult midwives or other females with inadequate medical knowledge. To this day, women often find themselves unable to describe their problems clearly to a male. In the face of these difficulties, one finds the Hippocratic physician taking refuge in abstract speculation. Hippocratic medicine taught, for example, that a male child develops on the right side of the womb and a female child on the left.¹¹

The requirements of the Law once again led the Talmudic rabbis to a pioneering role in medical history in the area of female reproductive anatomy and physiology. To provide a means for determining the origin of vaginal bleeding, the rabbis invented the vaginal speculum. This hollow lead tube, with a cotton swab attached to the top, allowed the rabbis to determine whether blood visible after intercourse came from the uterus and was, therefore, unclean.¹² It was of extreme importance to determine the cause of such bleeding because intercourse with a woman bleeding from the uterus rendered a man ritually unclean. Moreover, female bleeding on three successive occasions following intercourse necessitated the annulment of a marriage. Although the rabbis were interested here primarily in a religious question, their invention had the concrete medical benefit of detecting incipient cancer in the female organs. The earliest

10. Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium* IV. 25. The rabbinic statement on this matter is found in *Niddah* 25b.

11. The Hippocratic treatise, *Nature of Woman*, gives a highly abstract classification of the constitutions of women into humid and white, dry and dark, and ruddy.

12. This speculum is described in *Niddah* 66a.

mention of the speculum in classical medical literature is in the work of Paul of Aegina (6th century C.E.), while the Talmudic discussion of the apparatus seems to date from the third century C.E.

Most Talmudic anatomical and physiological discussions suggest close direct observation of the organ in question with a minimum of abstract speculation. In the tractate *Niddah*, Abba Saul is quoted as observing that the human fetus in its primary stages resembles a locust,¹³ a clear indication that he had observed such a fetus with his own eyes or knew of someone who had made such an observation. Hippocratic embryology, on the other hand, is highly abstract and fanciful. Fetal development is compared in the Hippocratic treatise, *Regimen I*, to a piece of music and the fetus itself to a musical instrument.¹⁴ Embryonic development, according to Hippocratic theory, depends upon the proportion of moisture and fire contributed by each parent during conception. It appears that, once again, although the Talmud is by no means free of fanciful notions concerning human reproduction,¹⁵ the rabbis have the edge over the Greeks by the accuracy of their observations.

To the student of Greco-Roman medicine, the most impressive revelation that the medical doctrine of the Talmud affords is the humaneness that fills the medical pronouncements of the rabbis. It is generally held that ancient medical ethics reached the highest point in the celebrated Hippocratic Oath.¹⁶ Taken when young apprentices were welcomed into the brotherhood of Hippocratic physicians, the oath prescribes that the doctor shall never use the medical art to harm a patient, shall never administer poisons, and shall engage in no wrongdoing in any house he enters, neither abusing the bodies of male or female patients nor divulging any secrets he overhears in the patient's house. Such injunctions do, indeed, represent a lofty conception of the physician's conduct, especially when set against the general level of conduct exhibited by earlier practitioners of the healing art and when one recalls that Greek and Roman physicians were not opposed to administering poisons to bothersome family members when so requested by their kin.

Nor is this brief document the only work in the Hippocratic Corpus which treats of the duties of the physician. The treatise *Decorum* demands that the physician be pure of character, free of greed and of any sort of shameless behavior. He must maintain a pleasant disposition in the presence of the patient, since a sour demeanor frightens a sick person. He

13. *Niddah* 25a.

14. *Regimen I*. 8.

15. For example, in the tractate *Berakhot* 5, Abba Benjamin is reported as saying that a couple desiring to produce a male offspring should position their bed in a north-south direction.

16. In his edition of the writings of the Hippocratic school, W.H.S. Jones, *Hippocrates, with an English Translation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), I, p. 296, writes of the Oath: "Here we have committed to writing those noble rules, loyal obedience to which has raised the calling of a physician to be the highest of all the professions."

must have all preparations ready when he enters the sick room so as not to make the patient doubt the physician's capabilities.¹⁷ The treatise entitled *The Physician* adds the notion that the doctor must demonstrate self-control, since every day he encounters women, maidens, and wealth, any of which might tempt him.¹⁸

The question of medical ethics is much more broadly conceived by the Talmudic rabbis than by the school of Hippocrates. It embraces discussions of the admissibility of practicing medicine, the treatment of the insane and terminally ill, euthanasia, sterilization, and a host of medical-ethical problems. Many of them were either not conceived of by the Greek physicians or were simply ignored by them as inconsequential. In reading the treatises of the Hippocratic Corpus which deal with medical ethics, one gets the uncomfortable feeling that, however noble may be the Greek concept of the doctor as a professional with moral responsibilities toward his patient, the motivation of the Hippocratic physician is, nevertheless, somewhat selfish, for an undercurrent that surfaces in the Hippocratic ethical writings is the concern that the doctor look good in the eyes of his patients and thus avoid loss of reputation. The principal concern of the Talmudic rabbis, however, was that the physician act in accordance with God's will while assuring the dignity and welfare of the patient.

Some rabbis considered healing solely the work of God, and any human endeavors in this area were, therefore, presumptuous. In the tractate *Berakhot*, for example, a prayer is given that the patient should utter while undergoing cupping, a procedure for drawing blood. He is to pray that God allow the healing to take place, for God, not the physician, has the ability to heal.¹⁹ Implied in the passage is a strong questioning of medical science on the grounds that it interferes with God's workings, an attitude shared by other Talmudic rabbis who argued that illness is the punishment for sin and repentance is its cure. Hence, in the tractate *Shabbat*, Rabbi Nathan holds that a man's wife is visited with death in punishment for his unfulfilled vows.²⁰ In general, however, the Talmudic rabbis appear to have taken a much more positive view of the healing art, finding support for their position in the Biblical injunction of Exodus 21:19 that he who has wounded another must see that he is healed.

A fundamental distinction exists between the Talmudic and Greek views of medical ethics which would seem to stem from contrasting concepts of the value of human life. The frequency with which the motif of exposure of an unwanted or maimed infant occurs in classical mythology²¹ suggests that, to the Greek mind, the human being *qua* human being

17. The prescriptions outlined here are found in *Decorum* 5, 7, and 11.

18. *The Physician* 1.

19. *Berakhot* 60a.

20. *Shabbat* 32b.

21. Hephaestus, Atalanta, Amphion and Zethus, Perseus, Oedipus, Dionysus, Paris, and even Zeus himself were exposed for one reason or another. In Roman mythology, one recalls the exposure of Romulus and Remus.

had few rights at birth and little intrinsic worth. Female children, in particular, were liable to suffer exposure, since providing a dowry for daughters could easily prove a crushing financial burden to a Greek family. For the Talmudic rabbis, however, human life was so sacred that the Sabbath could be violated to perform an operation even if that operation extended the life of the patient by only a few seconds.²²

This concern for the value of human life gave rise to discussion in the Talmud as to whether the life of a fetus is to be regarded as of equal value with the life of the mother. The mishnah to tractate *Oholot* VII. 6 states that if a woman is experiencing extremely difficult labor, the fetus may be removed limb by limb on the ground that at that time the life of the mother takes precedence over that of the fetus, but if the greater part of the fetus has emerged, the physician cannot endanger it, for one life cannot be set aside for the benefit of another.

The emphasis upon medical ethics by the Talmudic rabbis is, at root, a religious consideration and one should perhaps not expect such an emphasis in the Hippocratic Corpus. The school of Hippocrates had fought long and hard to free medicine from dominance by a priestly caste who were sometimes ignorant and sometimes merely self-serving and avaricious. It battled against charms and magic formulas, all of which had characterized the practice of medicine in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and even early Greece. Hippocrates and his school succeeded in discarding superstition and substituting observation and hypothesis based upon that observation, thus establishing a rational basis of medicine. Their error, as pointed out above, was a sometimes exaggerated reliance upon reason.

The Talmudic rabbis were clearly familiar with Greek medical writings and drew a great deal from them.²³ They acknowledged the value of direct and careful observation which the Hippocratics advocated. At the same time, they avoided the exaggerated reliance upon theory which plagued the Greek physicians.

It is a tragic irony of history that the medical discoveries of the rabbis made so little impact on the course of medicine because they were scattered throughout a work not intended as a medical treatise. Consequently, non-Jewish physicians in the medieval period did not study the Talmud, and even Jewish physicians in that period underestimated its medical implications. Greek medicine made little substantial progress in the seven centuries following the death of Hippocrates. Galen accepted the theory of humors as the basis for his pathology and handed this theory down to the centuries that came after him. Had the medical insights of the rabbis been more widely known, the art of healing in the Middle Ages would have been more sound, and certainly more humane.

22. An excellent discussion of the Jewish view of the preciousness of life is provided by Jakobovits (see above, note 2), pp. 45-58.

23. The medical vocabulary of the Talmud is heavily influenced by Greek terminology. The Talmudic name for gout, for example, is *podagra*, the Greek name for that malady. Jewish doctors may have studied at the court of the Ptolemies in Alexandria.

Rafael Trujillo – “Caribbean Cyrus”

HYMAN J. KISCH

“TRUJILLO IS LITERALLY ALMOST A PAL OF mine.” So wrote James N. Rosenberg, president of the prestigious American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (J.D.C.) and sponsor of many humanitarian causes, in a letter to Gov. Herbert H. Lehman. One wonders what combination of human events could have brought a cruel Latin-American dictator and a liberal New York Jewish lawyer into a relationship of mutual friendship. Equally intriguing is the paradox of a ruler who was considered a ruthless dictator, a bloody butcher and, yet, at the same time enjoyed the titles “El Benefactor,” “Genius of Peace,” and “Protector of the Working Class.” General Trujillo bestowed these benign titles upon himself, like the many medals with which he was fond of decorating his uniforms. These medals reflected the personality of a man whose arrogance and prejudices, fears and frustrations were displaced with devastating effect on friends and foes as well as on the body politic of the Dominican people. But time and chance combined to make German and Austrian refugees the fortuitous beneficiaries of Trujillo’s ambitions. At the Evian Conference called by Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1938, Trujillo, alone among thirty-two world representatives, agreed to admit up to 100,000 Jewish refugees into the Dominican Republic. Why did he do so? A complex of varied motivations can be found in the life and career of this notorious ruler which help to explain his generous offer to welcome the refugees.¹

Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina was the second son of eleven children. His paternal grandfather, Jose Trujillo Monaga, had married Silveria Valdez, a mulatto. On the maternal side, Trujillo’s grandfather, Pedro Molina, married the illegitimate daughter of Haitian parents. The black strain in Trujillo’s family was strongest in his brother, Hector, who was nicknamed El Negro. This mixture of blood and his Haitian origin are regarded by some biographers to be highly significant in Trujillo’s life. He became a blancophile bent on populating his country with whites.²

1. Letter of J.N. Rosenberg to H. Lehman (4/24/56), *Herbert H. Lehman Papers* (Columbia University); *Foreign Relations of the United States* (Diplomatic Correspondence), Vol. 1 (Washington, D.C., 1938), p. 756.

2. Robert D. Crasweller, *Trujillo, the Life and Times of a Caribbean Dictator* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), pp. 24–37; Albert C. Hicks, *Blood in the Streets* (New York: Creative Age Press, 1946), p. 21.

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"The General repeatedly indicated that he wants to augment the white population of the island," related George L. Warren, the executive secretary of Roosevelt's Advisory Committee on Political Refugees. Trujillo's position is made clear in unmistakable terms by a report of a commission that he appointed to formulate immigration policies for the republic. The commission warned that black incursions and infiltration from Haiti, as well as persistent immigration of blacks from Caribbean countries, threatened "to alienate the Dominican people from its original Spanish sources." By then, the Dominican Republic was already more than 87% non-white. From 1780 to 1935, the proportion of whites had declined from 80% to 13%. The specific breakdown was: pure white — 13%, colored — 67%, pure black — 19.4%. To help arrest this trend the Dominican Commission recommended the encouragement of European immigration. Here is a clue to one major reason why Trujillo offered to admit the German and Austrian Jewish refugees: they would help whiten the Republic's population. When his brother objected that victims of Nazism were likely to hate all dictators and could prove to be a source of trouble, he was reassured that "Our spies will keep an eye on them . . . Intelligent immigrants with healthy white blood will improve our line. Besides, I need the publicity."³

Why did Trujillo "need the publicity?" In 1937, a year before the Evian Conference, he had given the order for a murderous attack on some twelve to fifteen thousand Haitian blacks on the Dominican borderlands. These Haitians crossed the border annually to cut the sugar cane — the republic's number one industry — and many of them chose to remain in the country. Why Trujillo perpetrated the atrocities has never been adequately explained. Some say that it was to avoid paying the Haitians their wages. Others believe that, as a fanatical Negrophobe, he wished to rid the republic of blacks and, at the same time, obliterate his own Haitian background. "He was a mulatto proud of his white ancestry, despising his dark Haitian inheritance" (Jules Archer). The story of the massacre could not be censored by Trujillo and resulted in immediate and unfavorable international notoriety. What disturbed him most was the wide coverage and publicity given to the atrocities in the United States press. He remembered well the warning of the deposed Cuban dictator, Machado, about the power of the U.S. press to which he attributed his own downfall. Trujillo now believed that the news that he was ready to cooperate with President Roosevelt in a great humanitarian effort in behalf of German and Austrian Jewish refugees would gain him a good press in the United States; it could serve to restore a tarnished portrait. Astutely, he did not leave publicity to chance. His press agents included illustrious personages like

3. M.J. Troncosa, J. Ortega and E. Rodriguez, *Capacity of the Dominican Republic to Absorb Refugees* (Santo Domingo, 1946), p. 148; John Bartlow Martin, *Overtaken by Events* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), p. 20; Brookings Institution, *Refugee Settlement in the Dominican Republic* (Washington, D.C., 1942), p. 46.

Joseph E. Davies, Senator Millard F. Tydings and Franklin Roosevelt Jr. He spent millions of dollars in this country on a highly sophisticated program to prove that he was a great benefactor of the Dominican people, that his policy was based on friendship toward the United States and that he was a great humanitarian ready to give shelter to destitute and homeless refugees.⁴

Another factor also came into play. Ever since Trujillo came to power in 1930, relations with the United States were strained by two problems: the sugar quota and American control over Dominican customs. He had been advised that by sponsoring a settlement for Jewish refugees he could win the favor of Jewish leaders in the United States who would then create a favorable press and would exert pressure on Congress for more favored trade arrangements. He was particularly eager to have the United States raise the quota for Dominican sugar imports. Trujillo (nicknamed Mr. Sugar) and his family had control over 65% of the republic's sugar production, operating twelve of the sixteen sugar mills in the country. He now sought the aid of his "friend," the New York Jewish lawyer, James N. Rosenberg, who drew up the DORSA (Dominican Republic Settlement Ass.) contract for settling German and Austrian refugees at Sosua in the Dominican Republic. Rosenberg himself was impressed with the degree of Trujillo's reliance on him, as he noted in the letter to Governor Lehman, which was cited at the beginning of this paper. Less than one week after Trujillo signed the DORSA contract, he called on Rosenberg to see what could be done in Washington about raising the sugar quota. After sounding out State Department officials as well as Congressmen, Rosenberg advised the Dominican ambassador in Washington that the problem was complicated by American sugar interests in Cuba and the Phillipines. The sugar quotas were "influenced and dominated by invisible forces which are difficult, not to say impossible, to overcome."⁵

More successful was Rosenberg's advice and help in the liquidation of the U.S. Customs Receivership. When, in the early years of this century, the Dominican Republic could not pay its public debts, European powers sent their battleships to collect them. Immediately, Theodore Roosevelt invoked the Monroe Doctrine in order to prevent European powers from interfering in Dominican affairs. That was in 1904. Declaring that the United States would exercise fiscal responsibility for the Dominican Republic, he landed American troops there and control over Dominican

4. Arturo P. Espaillat, *Trujillo, the Last Caesar* (Chicago: H. Regnery, 1963), p. 74; Jules Archer, *The Dictators* (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1967), p. 72; Brookings Institution, *Op. cit.*, p. 46; Hicks, *Op. cit.*, p. 132; Martin, *Op. cit.*, p. 475; Hubert C. Herring, *A History of Latin America* (New York: Knopf, 1964), p. 413.

5. Herring, *Op. cit.*, p. 450; "Confidential Memorandum for Generalissimo Rafael L. Trujillo," DORSA: *Recibidos y Enviados*, 1940 (Santo Domingo, D.R.: Archive General de la Nacion). This memorandum was sent to Trujillo by his ambassador in Washington at the request of Mr. Rosenberg after several interviews in various departments of the government on the 26 and 27 of February, 1940.

customs was imposed during the next four decades. In 1936, Trujillo started negotiations with the United States to end the Customs Receivership which he considered an obstacle to the economic growth of the Republic, an affront to Dominican sovereignty, and inconsistent with F.D.R.'s Good Neighbor Policy. After four years of frustrated efforts, in early February of 1940, Trujillo once more turned to Rosenberg and asked him to represent the Dominican Republic in Washington for the purpose of ending the Receivership. In less than a month, Rosenberg informed Trujillo that he had called on several members of the State Department and had been advised that the time was ripe to enter negotiations for the abrogation of the Customs convention. However, Rosenberg made it clear that it would not be "convenient" that he himself appear as the legal adviser for the Dominican Republic because that might hurt DORSA's refugee project at Sosua. Rosenberg said that he was devoting all of his time to the Sosua project but that "wherever he goes he leaves seeds in his favor, seeds which he hopes will grow to be fruitful to his country." In his stead, he recommended George M. Rublee who, he assured Trujillo, had the absolute confidence of President Roosevelt, was the first director of the Intergovernmental Committee for Political Refugees from Germany and Austria established at Evian and was then in the Dominican Republic to study the work at the Sosua settlement. Rosenberg assured Trujillo that Rublee could be very helpful. Trujillo took advantage of the occasion to consult Rublee, whose advice, apparently, was sound, for between July and September of that year a series of exchanges between Ciudad Trujillo and Washington led to the dissolution of the U.S. customs control in the Dominican Republic.

This was a tremendous achievement for the economic independence of the Dominican Republic and Rosenberg's advice and guidance had obviously played a significant part in the events. Trujillo's calculated beneficence to Jewish refugees was paying him dividends and to his long list of titles he could now add another, "Restorer of the Financial Independence of the Republic."⁶

The least charitable explanation for Trujillo's offer of asylum to 100,000 refugees was that he was collecting \$500 for every one who was admitted (100,000 x \$500 would make a tidy fortune). Dominican law did require a \$500 entry fee for immigrants, but the Jewish refugees headed for Sosua were not subject to any tax or entry fee whatsoever, as provided by Article III of the Sosua Agreement. Sosuans who were interviewed confirmed the fact that no entry fees were exacted from them. Although personal gain was not Trujillo's motive in sponsoring the settlement, he

6. G. Pope Atkins, Larman C. Wilson, *The United States and the Trujillo Regime* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1972), pp. 47-52; *The New York Times*, September 23, 1939; Trujillo Memorandum *loc. cit.*; *Trujillo-Hull Treaty of 1940*, Treaty Series #965 (U.S. Gov't. Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1941), p. 3; Joaquin Balaguer, *El Tratado Trujillo-Hull y la liberacion financiera de la Republica Dominicana* (Bogota, 1941), p. 112.

did believe that the Jewish refugees would bring economic benefits to the country.⁷

The Dominican Republic suffered not only from underindustrialization but, also, from underpopulation. Neighboring Puerto Rico, which is about equal in size, had 500 inhabitants to the square mile while the Dominican Republic had only 85. An influx of Jewish immigrants would help rectify the population deficiency in the Republic — an additional motive for Trujillo's Evian offer.⁸

Dr. Maurice Hexter, president of the Dominican Republic Settlement Association in 1943, relates that Trujillo had a genuinely warm feeling for Jews for an entirely personal reason. His daughter, Flor de Oro, was at school in Paris between 1930 and 1932, and her French schoolmates snubbed her and caused her considerable anguish. However, one classmate, a Jewish girl, was sympathetic and friendly. Trujillo, in gratitude, showered her with favors and, when she married, presented her husband with a tobacco plantation in the Dominican Republic.

One would be hard put to decide which of the reasons presented above were most significant in explaining Trujillo's motivation for welcoming Jewish refugees. All of them contributed in varying degree to explain the paradox of a dictator turned saint. His biographer, Crasweller, believes that Trujillo's "instinctual nature had many facets, some of them quite contradictory . . . [E]asy categories will not contain him." But, to the Jewish settlers of Sosua, "explanations" for Trujillo's Evian offer were unnecessary. In interviews with these former refugees from Nazi-dominated Europe, there was one recurrent response, "He saved us!" David Stern, the Israeli agronomist who was summoned by Dr. Hexter to serve as the Director of Sosua in 1945, said that Trujillo would be remembered in Jewish history as the "Caribbean Cyrus."⁹

We have noted the key role played by James N. Rosenberg in his association with Trujillo in the establishment of the Sosua settlement. He was outstanding for his diplomacy and astuteness, and for promoting and maintaining good relations with the mercurial Trujillo, through the 40s and 50s and up to the very day when the dictator was assassinated on May 30, 1961.

The "Agreement" which Rosenberg drew up between the Trujillo government and DORSA was signed on January 30, 1940 in the Palacio Nacional in the presence of over one hundred persons, including representatives of the intergovernmental Committee for Political Refugees (set

7. *Dominican Immigration Law #279*, 1932 (National Archives, Washington, D.C.); *Joseph D. Chamberlin Files*, item 1317 (New York: YIVO); *DORSA Agreement*, January 30, 1940, Article III. The Sosua settlers were not to be considered immigrants, but colonizers, and, therefore, not subject to the \$500 entry fee; *DORSA Pamphlet #1*, 2/15/40 (New York: I.D.C.), p. 9.

8. Brookings Institution, *Op. cit.*, p. 47; Troncosa, Ortega and Rodriguez, *Op. cit.*, p. 148.

9. Bertita Harding, *The Land Columbus Loved* (New York: Coward McCann, 1949), p. 111; Crasweller, *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

up at Evian in 1938), members of the United States State Department, Dominican Vice President Troncosa, as well as Generalissimo Trujillo. In Article I it featured a Bill of Rights of which Mr. Rosenberg was justly proud. The Dominican Republic guaranteed

to the settlers and their descendants full opportunity to continue their lives and occupations, free from molestation, discrimination, or persecution, with full freedom of religion; equality of opportunities as well as other rights inherent to human beings.

Here was a promise of liberty and equality — of human rights not always enjoyed by aliens in a foreign country. Article II noted that the Republic did not assume any of the financial obligations of the settlers or of the sponsoring agency, DORSA. This, of course, was in line with Roosevelt's assurance to the thirty-two nations at Evian that private agencies would "pick up the tab" for all refugee expenses. The settlers, though not obliged to cover the costs of their transportation, were expected, in the course of a number of years, to reimburse DORSA for expenditures made on their behalf in establishing them on farms in the Dominican Republic. The refugees were not to be regarded as wards of charity but as self-reliant farmers who would ultimately own their farms outright. It was DORSA's duty to care for them and to promote economic projects. All expenses were to be borne by DORSA until the settlers became self-supporting.¹⁰

The contract was signed by two representatives of the Dominican government as well as by Rosenberg and Dr. Joseph Rosen. It also bore the signatures of the Rt. Hon. Earl Winterton, chairman of the Intergovernmental Committee for Political Refugees, and its director, Sir Herbert Emerson, who succeeded George Rublee. It also received the approval of the State Department and the President of the United States. Cordell Hull, then secretary of State, cabled Rosenberg, that "The President is . . . highly gratified to learn of the happy conclusion of your arrangement with the Dominican Government . . ."¹¹

James G. MacDonald hailed the contract as a "unique document in modern history, whereby a Government and a group of citizens engage mutually to foster a humanitarian project for rehabilitation of stateless and homeless refugees." Robert T. Pell, Assistant Chief of the Division of European Affairs in the State Department, paid tribute to Rosenberg for his personal role in drawing up the contract. "The Agreement," he asserted, "was in itself a testimonial to his skill as a negotiator, to his finesse as a diplomat, and above all to his great heart as a humanitarian."¹²

The Sosua settlement project also served Rosenberg's personal, deeply-felt needs at a critical time in his career as philanthropist. In 1938,

10. *DORSA Agreement* (New York: J.D.C., 1940), Articles I, II, III, IV; *SOSUA*, a DORSA publication (New York: October 1941), p. 4.

11. *DORSA Pamphlet #1*, pp. 2, 15.

12. Herbert Agar, *The Saving Remnant* (New York: Viking Press, 1960), pp. 47-51.

the year of Evian, the Jewish Autonomous Agricultural Settlement in the Crimea, into which Rosenberg had poured his heart, was brought to a "sudden end" by the Soviet government. In the early 20s, Dr. Joseph Rosen, a Russian-born agronomist and representative of the Joint Distribution Committee, had informed Rosenberg that the Soviet Union was ready to help in the establishment of a Jewish community on the rich soil of Crimea. This project appealed to Rosenberg, a non-Zionist, who believed in helping Jews as nationals of whatever land they inhabited.¹³ Accordingly, in 1924, the J.D.C. set up the American Jewish Joint Agricultural Corporation (Agro-Joint) with Rosenberg as president. Some 300,000 Russian urban Jews were resettled in the Ukraine, particularly in the Crimea, and Rosenberg's book, *On the Steppes* (1927), was his panegyric to the Jewish farmers of the Crimea. But in 1938, without any explanation, the Soviet government ordered an end to all J.D.C. activity in the Crimea. Dr. Rosen was forced to return to the U.S. and his Russian-Jewish assistants, Lubarsky, an agronomist, and Graves, a lawyer, were never heard from again. Later, the Crimea was invaded by Hitler and no trace was left of the Jewish settlers. Between Stalin and Hitler, *finis* had been written to that autonomous Crimean Jewish community. In a letter to Governor Lehman, Rosenberg wrote:

There has never been a single word from these settlers. I am certain that Stalin must have finished the job of wholesale murder. . . . This was the greatest effort of my life, and an utter, complete, black tragedy in its finish.¹⁴

The 1939 Sosua project provided an outlet for Rosenberg's dedication to the persecuted and unwanted of his people. He responded readily to the call for action by Myron C. Taylor (head of the American delegation to the Evian Conference) to finance the establishment of a refugee settlement in the Dominican Republic. For the greater part of the next eight years (1940-48), he served as President of DORSA. Once again, he was united with his former colleague of the Crimea project, Dr. Rosen, who was now Vice-President and Director of the Sosua project. Rosenberg's organizational skills were again combined with Rosen's technical know-how. Lawyer and agronomist were once more transferring urbanized Jews — this time, the refugees from Germany and Austria — to an agricultural setting under the sponsorship of another authoritarian government.

However, Sosua enjoyed both the approval and the cooperation of the Roosevelt administration which had inspired its genesis. International agencies of the Western World (Intergovernmental Committee for Political Refugees, Refugee Coordination Foundation), were its godfathers, concerned for its success. For his own reasons, Trujillo was eager to please

13. Although Rosenberg was a non-Zionist, he was concerned for Israel's security and welfare. See his letter to Gov. Lehman (Note 1).

14. Letter of James N. Rosenberg to Herbert H. Lehman, 1/3/62, *Lehman Papers* (New York: Columbia University).

the United States by giving the refugee settlement his "best assistance."

That "best assistance" included the Sosua estate which Trujillo gave as a gift to Jewish refugees — a tract of land consisting of some 26,000 acres. The task of selecting the refugees, transporting them from Europe to Sosua, and establishing them as farmer-settlers was assumed by DORSA. Trujillo and Rosenberg had reached an understanding that the settlement of Sosua should proceed modestly, starting with about 500 and increasing in number as the experiment succeeded. "There are apt to be early and pressing appeals," wrote the Dominican ambassador to the United States, Andres Pastoriza, "to further open our doors: appeals to which we shall not be deaf, but which we can meet only in due time."¹⁵ But the time was 1939, a year of desperation for countless thousands who sought such open doors. Yet, almost two years passed after the Evian conference before the first contingent of thirty-seven refugees from Central Europe arrived in May of 1940. These were the vanguard of the 500 with whom the Sosua settlement was to be established. By 1948, the population of Sosua had reached a peak of 663 settlers. In the years between 1940 and 1970, some 800 to 1,000 Jews came to this Caribbean refuge.¹⁶

Among the many who had hoped to find refuge in the Dominican Republic were two Viennese relatives of Mrs. Herbert H. Lehman, Mrs. Margarete Schiff and Miss Dorothea Breuer. Both were daughters of Sigmund Freud's first collaborator, Dr. Breuer. Gov. Lehman succeeded in getting Dominican visas for them. But, by the time the visas arrived Mrs. Schiff had died and Miss Breuer had committed suicide.¹⁷

Most settlers considered Sosua a port-of-call, a place to await the end of the war. After 1945 their number declined sharply as they sought admission to the United States, Canada, Argentina and other Latin-American countries. Nevertheless, those that remained were able, with the generous support of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, to establish highly successful meat and dairy cooperatives whose products have been on sale throughout the Dominican Republic and are considered the finest in the country. In a short time, Sosua became the butter, cheese and sausage capital of the nation.

On the other hand, Jewish religious and cultural life did not reflect the same success and vigor, though the settlers did make a valiant effort to establish Jewish institutions and preserve Jewish traditions. A barrack was set aside as a synagogue, where services were conducted on the Sabbath, where Bar-Mizvahs were held and Jewish festivals were celebrated. A German-Spanish monthly, *KOLAINU, LA VOZ de SOSUA*, was published, reflecting local and world-wide Jewish interests. The Ost-Juden, the

15. Letter of Andres Pastoriza to James N. Rosenberg, 10/19/32, *Wischnitzer Papers*, in possession of Rachel Wischnitzer; *DORSA Agreement*, Article IIc (New York: J.D.C., 1940).

16. *Vital Statistics - Sosua 1946-1965* (New York: J.D.C.); the J.D.C. was instrumental in securing from Trujillo Dominican visas for refugees although they did not come to the Dominican Republic. Some 4,000 visas ("Passports to life") were issued, which were then used to gain admission to other countries (Agar, *Op. cit.*, p. 82).

East-European Jews in Sosua, helped awaken a feeling of Jewish identity among the Austrian and German members through the presentation of such plays in Yiddish as Anski's *The Dybbuk*, Sholem Aleichem's *Tevya der Milchiger* and a musical, *Die Romainische Khassena*. A school for Sosua children taught both the secular curriculum as well as Hebrew and Biblical history.

But these activities took place only in the early years. As the 40s rolled into the 50s and the 50s into the 60s, the Jewish content of the curriculum was watered down to Bible stories once a week and an explanation of the Jewish holidays as they occurred. Religious services took place mainly on the High Holy Days. *KOLAINU* ceased publication as early as 1947. The young people left the country to study in the American colleges and did not return and the Jewish complexion of Sosua changed as Dominicans entered the community through intermarriage. In 1943, out of a total population of 476 there were 137 single men and 37 single women. It is not surprising that many of the men married Dominican women, as Trujillo had anticipated and to which he looked forward as a means of "whitening" the population. Today, of the 100 people in Sosua, there are only five families where both mates are Jewish.

Had immigration to Sosua continued after the war, survival of a Jewish community might have been vouchsafed. In the years between 1945 and 1948, close to 800,000 Jews arrived in Israel, 80,000 in U.S. and Canada, but hardly a trickle went to the Dominican Republic. On the contrary, as indicated above, Sosua's Jewish population declined steadily until today there are no more than 50 Jewish families, almost all of which are mixed marriages. Those that have remained have prospered. In 1970, over three million dollars worth of dairy and meat products were sold. The Dominicans, in speaking of Sosua, have expressed high regard and admiration for the Jewish settlers.

The people of Sosua gave our country an example of what can be accomplished by hard work. . . . Too many Dominicans regard work as undignified. In addition they have mixed with our people and have become part of us.¹⁷

The Jews of Sosua have mixed with the Dominican inhabitants to the point where there is no hope for the survival of a Jewish community. Crassweller, Trujillo's biographer, saw clearly that Sosua would "endure only as a small memorial to old sacrifices and hopes. It remains today quiet and remote at the end of a rough road. . . ."¹⁸

Some day, tourists will come from all parts of the Dominican Republic, as well as from abroad, and they may be told that Jews once lived there. Perhaps they will be shown the Torah in the synagogue or a Hanukah

17. Herbert H. Lehman Papers (Columbia University), Nov. 28, Dec. 5, 1941.

18. Crassweller, *Op. cit.*, p. 200; Stanley T. Samuels, "Moshav in the Caribbean — Sosua Revisited," *American Jewish Yearbook* (Philadelphia, 1972), p. 456.

trompo (dreidel) in the school. A well versed tourist guide may even recount that it all started with a conference of thirty-two nations, summoned by Franklin D. Roosevelt to find a refuge for thousands of victims of the Nazi terror. Roosevelt saw in the Sosua settlement a “turning point” in the history of the refugees, but that “turning point” proved to be only “a tiny footnote” in Jewish history. Nonetheless, it involved considerable financial contributions, the devoted efforts of J.D.C. personnel, salaried and unsalaried, and the hard work of Jewish refugees who strove to build a new community and maintain their traditions in an alien environment. They proved beyond a doubt that it was possible for urbanized Jews to live in a sub-tropical climate and successfully to combine dairy-farming with industry. But in spite of the economic security that they enjoyed under the J.D.C. “umbrella,” many settlers foresaw that there was no hope for their children to maintain their Jewish identity in Sosua.

For a while we lived as in a golden cage, (remarked a former Sosuan now residing with her family in New York). They took care of us . . . but soon our children grew older . . . [W]hen they reached their teens we knew it was now or never. We had to leave or face assimilation. So we left.

Sosua was planned as an experiment in Jewish colonization — ready to receive thousands of refugees after the war. But the results did not support the hopes of the experimenters. Two important variables were missing. The settlers were too isolated and too few in number. Far from centers of Jewish population and Jewish culture, it was not possible for so few to build a viable Jewish community that could resist the forces that lead to assimilation.

The Sosua settlement, which served as a “golden cage” for homeless Jewish refugees, was made possible because it served the personal ambitions and the ego needs of Trujillo and Rosenberg. Trujillo welcomed the Jewish refugees and provided the site for their new community, hoping that his gesture would gain him favor with the Roosevelt Administration. It did. For Rosenberg, Sosua provided an outlet for his commitment to Jewish colonization and his concern for Europe’s homeless Jewish refugees. Politics and the Jewish refugee problem of the 1930s and the 1940s made strange bedfellows and they help to explain the paradox of the unusual friendship between a Latin-American dictator and a New York humanitarian.

Elijah, the Ubiquitous

The Prophet Elijah in the Development of Judaism: A Depth-Psychological Study. By AHARON WIENER. (The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, eds., Louis Jacobs, David Goldstein, and Lionel Kochan.) London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978.

Reviewed by LAWRENCE L. BESSERMAN

HOW DID THE VIOLENT, brooding, and enigmatic Biblical prophet Elijah become, in later Jewish tradition, the benevolent messenger of God, who may appear at any time and in the most unlikely disguises (as a harlot, a Roman official, an Arab)?

Dr. Wiener's comprehensive book reviews the entire span of Elijah's activity, from Biblical antiquity to the present. Individual chapters treat the figure of Elijah in the Bible, the apocrypha, aggadah, kabbalah, Sabbatian movement, hasidism, liturgy and ritual, folklore, Christianity, Islam, and contemporary Judaism. Though some chapters are less full than others, the final product is an excellent synthesis of diverse sources and traditions.

As the subtitle of the book proclaims, the author's methodology is "depth-psychological," that is, Jungian, and his goal is not merely to catalogue the multitudinous and disparate appearances of Elijah but to explain their psychological significance. A typical example of the psychological interpretative commentary found throughout this study is Wiener's comment on the *kol demamah dakkah* "the small voice of silence" which Elijah heard at Mount Horeb:

Psychologically this means that the consciousness adjusts to listen to and to observe the unconscious, in order to become aware of its contents and to understand them (p. 186).

To many students of the Bible and of Jewish tradition this approach will seem quaint if not altogether eccentric, while to those familiar with the writings of Jung and his followers the angle of vision will be familiar.

Three main stages in Elijah's long career in the development of Judaism are identified: he is, first, a historical and Biblical figure, then an archetype, and, finally, in hasidism, a psychic "factor" that "leads man to psychic unity by full harmonic activation of his potential and the experience of union with the Divine" (p. 189). Elijah's struggle for psychic unity, his attempt to reconcile himself to both his masculine and feminine aspects of Divinity, is what accounts, according to Wiener, for Elijah's mysterious behavior — his flight to the desert, retreat to the cave, and ascent to heaven. As Wiener analyzes the Biblical account of Elijah one can already see the lines of filiation to the Jewish mystical tradition. Mystics of both the "ecstatic" and "theosophic" variety turned to Elijah in their quest for enlightenment, as Wiener shows in his excellent chapter on Elijah and Jewish mysticism. "Every Jewish mystic goes Elijah's way" (p. 110).

Readers who are not swayed by psychological explanations of religious phenomena will still find much of interest in this study. Elijah's numerous shapes and guises in the aggadah are thoroughly surveyed, with only an occasional psychological observation in passing (those who like the Jungian approach will, of course, find this section of the book less exciting). We learn of Elijah's role as psychopomp, leading the souls of the just to paradise and shuttling the souls of the sinful from hell to heaven for their Sabbath rest — then back again to hell for six more days of punishment. Elsewhere we

are told of the pious, wealthy Jew who complained to his rabbi that Elijah never visited his Passover seder:

The rabbi answered: "In your neighborhood there lives a very poor family with many children. Call on the man and propose to him that you and your family celebrate the next Passover in his house, and for this purpose provide him and his whole family with everything necessary for the eight Passover days. Then on the *Seder* night Elijah will certainly come." The man did as the rabbi told him, but after Passover he came to the rabbi and claimed that again he had waited in vain to see Elijah. The rabbi answered: "I know very well that Elijah came on the *Seder* night to the house of your poor neighbor. But of course you could not see him." And the rabbi held a mirror before the face of the man and said: "Look, this was Elijah's face that night" (p. 139).

Elijah the Ubiquitous he might be called: present at circumcisions, at the Passover seder, liable to appear at any moment to those in need of divine guidance or assistance, and destined to announce the coming of the messiah. No other figure in the history of Judaism has been pressed into service in quite this way. Thanks to Wiener's fine book we have been brought closer to an understanding of why Elijah's labors never cease.

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Discovering Lost Treasures.

Jerome's Commentary on Daniel: A Study of Comparative Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the Hebrew Bible. By JAY BRAVERMAN. Washington. Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1978. 162 pp.

Reviewed by ARNOLD AGES

IT IS ONE of the smaller ironies in history that probably the greatest expert on the Church Fathers in modern times was Harry Austryn Wolfson, the late Nathan Littauer Professor of Jewish philosophy at Harvard. Austryn was an *illui* (prodigy) whose Talmudical acumen earned him rabbinical *s'mikhhah* at the age of eighteen. By the time he had reached middle age, Wolfson was a recognized expert, not only on patristic literature but on the Kalam (medieval Islamic philosophy) as well.

It is not unprecedented, then, for Jewish scholars to busy themselves with research and inquiry into religious traditions other than their own. It is all the more logical, moreover, when those traditions impinge upon Jewish history and thought. This kind of exercise can be defended, if defense be necessary, on the Talmudic dictum that Jews welcome wisdom no matter what the source.

It is in this context that Rabbi Jay Braverman has now published a splendid study of the relationship between Jerome, one of the outstanding Church Fathers, and the text of the Book of Daniel. In a sense, Dr. Braverman's work goes far beyond that perimeter in as much as he explores (particularly in the first half of his book) the whole gamut of Biblical exegesis and commentary as it existed in the early years of the common era. In this most instructive section the author defines and elaborates on various Christian schools of Biblical hermeneutics, showing simultaneously how Jerome synthesized his own approach to Scripture. Two schools of learning provided Jerome with a matrix from which he derived his own unique orientation. The Antiochian tradition required exposition of the text to be based on the literal interpretation. The Alexandrian view maintained that allegory was a legitimate exegetical device to obtain the spiritual significance of texts.

The third interpretive modality which helped form Jerome's attitude towards the Bible was the rabbinic tradition. "Jerome was the Church Father most conversant with Jewish traditions," writes Braverman. "He surpasses all others in his erudition as well as in his importance for Judaism." The reason that Jerome's profile is so prominent stems from his mastery of the Hebrew language, and of the richness of the rabbinic sources which he also acquired with an almost intimidating competence. Several fascinating sections in this monograph deal with the problems that confronted Jerome in his determination to learn both oral and written Hebrew. This linguistic exercise was not undertaken merely for the sake of intellectual curiosity. "I once proposed to make available for Latin listeners the secrets of Hebrew erudition and the recondite teachings of the Masters of the synagogue, as long as the latter is in keeping with the Holy Scriptures." This is Jerome's purpose — to make available the rabbinic traditions to the uninitiated. He is, then, one of the great intermediaries between the world of Jewish learning and Christian Biblical studies.

Jerome flourished between 331-420 of the common era. He was, therefore, already heir to much anti-Judaic teaching, which the Church had been fostering for three centuries. The triumphalism of the Church is attenuated in Jerome's writings but it is, nevertheless, still present. Certain ungracious epithets find their way into his prose. Jewish learning is described variously as "belching and nausea," "foolish tales, inept inventions and anile fables." Elsewhere this remarkable exegete descends to bitter inelegancies such as "the Jew's mourning is the Christian's joy," or "If it is expedient to hate any men and to loathe any race, I have a strange dislike for

those of the circumcision." In the intemperance of such attacks one is reminded of a Luther at his abusive worst.

In his excursus into Jerome's activity as a translator, editor and commentator, Dr. Braverman presents a succinct and cogent explanation of the background and contours of Biblical learning among early Christian scholars. Since these latter were not conversant with the original Hebrew of the Torah and *Tanakh*, they had to rely on translations. The Septuagint, a Greek version of Scripture, was the product of Alexandrian Jews and from about 270 B.C.E. it was accepted as an accurate version of the Hebrew original. By Jerome's time, because of certain doctrinal disputes, Jews had become generally uneasy with the text of the Septuagint while Christians looked upon it with increasing devotion and reverence.

The controversy surrounding this translation provoked a great deal of discussion among early Christian scholars regarding the authenticity of various texts in Scripture, as well as the definition of the canon of the Bible. What books were to be properly admitted into the confines of what Christians call the "Old Testament?" What is the appropriate order of these books? These questions were addressed by Origen, one of the most learned and most militant of the Church Fathers. Dr. Braverman's survey of the latter's attempt to establish a correct text of the Hebrew Bible shows that Origen was motivated not only by scholarly purposes but by a polemical zeal to elevate the reputation of the Septuagint and to denigrate Jews and Judaism — not the most edifying rationale for research!

By contrast, Jerome, despite occasional distemper fits where Jews are concerned, was a scholar whose erudition, linguistic skills and translating powers were admirable.

His prodigious translating exercise of the entire Hebrew Bible into Latin became known as the Vulgate, and is, to this day, the basis for the authorized Catholic version of Scripture.

This fact, of course, is well known to any serious student of Bible. What is not well known, however, is the image and scope of rabbinic teachings as they emerge from Jerome's commentary on various Biblical books. It is Dr. Braverman's merit to have isolated, translated and analyzed sixteen separate passages that are found in Jerome's commentary on the Book of Daniel with a view to ascertaining the basis for Jerome's claims within his work to be citing rabbinic sources. The passages in question deal with disparate matters: Daniel and his friends as eunuchs, Noah as a preacher before the flood, the "seventy weeks," the "beast standing on one side" (Persia?), the chronology of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. By researching midrashic and other rabbinic sources Dr. Braverman, in a fine feat of scholarly discipline, has been able to track down rabbinic sources for ten of the interpretations which Jerome attributes to the rabbis. "Thus we can credit Jerome with the preservation of six more otherwise 'lost' Jewish traditions," says the author. The assumption here is, of course, that over the centuries and through the fallibility of oral and written traditions, Jews have lost some aspects of rabbinic thought that were once well known to our ancestors. The irony is that those traditions have been dormant these many years in the writings of Jerome, awaiting excavation and discovery by Dr. Braverman—who has acquitted himself more than adequately in discovering these lost treasures.

This reviewer feels constrained to point out that Dr. Braverman's essay suffers somewhat from the well known malady called *dissertationitis*; the writing style is acceptable but certainly not Churchillian. One of its major defects (and the word defect depends on your perspective) is that some of the most instructive and illuminating remarks in the treatise are interred in a massive footnote apparatus that covers almost half the text. This is a pity, for the author's research skills reside precisely in that area. Readers of this volume are urged, nay, ordered to read those footnotes, however challenging the chore might appear.

It is only by doing so that one will be able to appreciate the original contribution to learning which Dr. Braverman has made.

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A Unique Rabbi

Milton Steinberg: Portrait of a Rabbi. By SIMON NOVECK. New York. KTAV Publishing House, 1978. 343 pp.

Reviewed by ISIDOR B. HOFFMAN

AN IMPORTANT BOOK about a great rabbi. There have been few American rabbis like Milton Steinberg, perhaps none who combined so remarkably the qualities of head and heart, of reason and faith. Only in the last fifteen years of his life (he died in 1950 at the age of forty-six) did recognition of his unique place in the rabbinate come from his colleagues, congregants and the public. A biography of him might never have been written were it not for the initiative, persistence and prodigious research of the author, Simon Noveck, who took up this task belatedly and allowed over a decade to elapse before completing it.

The writer of this review came into close contact with Steinberg

through correspondence when Steinberg was a student at The Jewish Theological Seminary, when he was rabbi in Indianapolis and New York and when he was chairman of the Social Justice Committee of The Rabbinical Assembly. In the early 40s he became a member of Steinberg's congregation and attended the Sabbath and Holyday services at which he officiated and delivered sermons.

This is a skillfully constructed biography, built on both chronological and thematic foundations. It covers the personal and human as well as the philosophical and theological. It is concise almost to a fault — one could wish for a more extended analysis of some phases of Steinberg's life. (The original manuscript was about twice as long as the published version.) Thousands of letters and other unpublished documents were read. There were 150 interviews. Everything that was written by or about him was scrutinized. Of value, too, are the author's personal recollections of Steinberg as a teacher at the JTS. The biographer also had the privilege and opportunity of direct association with him when he became associate rabbi of the Park Avenue Synagogue during that tremendous last year of Steinberg's life during which he drove himself relentlessly, realizing that the end might be imminent.

There are fifty pages of notes and eight of bibliography. Both are helpful to readers who may wish to pursue Steinberg's life and thought more extensively and intensively. The notes would have been more easily referred to had they been indicated by page rather than merely by chapter headings. There is an interesting list of the topics of the sermons that Steinberg delivered on Friday evenings at the Park Avenue Synagogue. Sixteen pages of pictures, mostly of Steinberg and his family, are a welcome addition to the printed matter.

Chapter headings are useful in emphasizing the significant aspects of Steinberg's life, as, for example: "Formative Influences," describing his boyhood and adolescence in Rochester and New York; "Rabbi in the Metropolis," dealing with his activities in Indianapolis and New York and with his marriage; "Communal and Literary Interests," in which the author describes Steinberg as lecturer, participant in Reconstructionism, Hadassah, the 92nd Street YMHA, teacher at the Seminary and writer of the novel *As A Driven Leaf*.

The subsequent chapters, linking up Steinberg's life from 1938 to his death, are titled "The War Years," "Through the Shadows," "The Mature Years," "Unfinished Tasks," and "Steinberg's Philosophy of Religion."

The last chapter is best of all. It examines in depth Steinberg's growth in philosophy and theology. The author had dealt with earlier stages of Steinberg's development in "Choosing a Career" and "Rabbinical Student," expanding especially on the influence of Rabbi Jacob Kohn, Professor Mordecai Kaplan, and Professor Morris Raphael Cohen. The influence of these teachers is related in fascinating detail. The section, "Early Theological Essays," continues with Steinberg's thinking, writing and lecturing on religious philosophy and Judaism. All of it is climaxed by a profound and lengthy analysis in the final chapter, "Steinberg's Philosophy of Religion," subdivided under the headings: Philosophical Framework, Religion as Weltanschauung, Criteria for a Rational Theology, Concept of Theism, Interpretation of Evil, and Attitude to Man.

The breadth of Steinberg's reading in philosophy and theology was amazing. It included the major Greek philosophers (some in the original Greek), Spinoza, Hegel, Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill,

Schopenhauer, Bergson, contemporary American philosophers, particularly Royce, Dewey, Santayana, Whitehead and James, and theologians Kierkegaard, Brunner, Barth, Brightman, Hartshorne, Buber and the Niebuhrs.

Steinberg's interest in philosophy and theology continued throughout his life. His writing and lecturing in these fields culminated in a series of four lectures given just a few months before his death. Of his written work, Noveck writes discerningly:

Steinberg's theological writings are marked by a complete openness and receptivity to truth whatever the source, and by a sense of fairness in stating points of view different from his own. Written with the lucidity, force, and persuasiveness which characterized all his writings, his theological essays are never shallow or superficial. His point of departure is always the Jewish tradition, for which he shows a constant sense of reverence. . . . He also referred to himself as a "Hellenist". . . . The rational emphasis of Greek thought, its intellectual freedom and scientific spirit as well as its aesthetic values, remained permanent influences. He continued to believe that the ideal pattern for living would be a synthesis of Hellenistic philosophy, science, and art with Hebraic religion and morality.

Despite the anti-rationalist tendencies of his lifetime, Steinberg staunchly upheld the power and relevance of reason. "In the present age when so much play is given to enthusiasm and the irrational element in religion, his plea that reason not be abandoned in the theological enterprise continues to be a source of encouragement and stimulation to religious rationalists" (p. 266).

Steinberg was optimistic about man and society. He criticized as morbid the emphasis on sin and evil of Christian thinkers such as Reinhold Niebuhr. One can sur-

mise how he would have responded to the current preoccupation with Auschwitz and the Holocaust. Similarly, one may wonder what he would have thought of the Seminary's trend towards greater stress on Halakhah. There are only two brief references to Halakhah in this entire book. In the observance of the Sabbath and the dietary laws Steinberg was concerned with the spirit rather than with the letter of the law.

Three of the most comprehensive and exciting parts of the biography describe in step-by-step detail the controversies in which Steinberg was deeply involved: *Commentary*, The Rabbinical Assembly Prayerbook and The Jewish Theological Seminary. Some of the problems relating to *Commentary* and to the Seminary are still with us, albeit in modified scope, yet in some aspects in aggravated degree. The boldness and courage that Steinberg showed in these extraordinary exposés of prestigious institutions aroused the admiration of many of his colleagues who shared his thinking but lacked his initiative and self-confidence. His determination to proceed to make public his heterodox views about the Jewish Establishment was strengthened by his realization that he might not have long to live. When friends expressed concern that these attacks might endanger his life, he wrote:

It is part of the business of being young and perfectly well that one imagines that he has forever to do the things that need to be done. But now it has been brought home to me that I may not have forever to do the things I feel need to be done. If my body these days can ill afford a controversy, my soul can afford acquiescence even less.

Candor, insight and sensitivity are shown by Noveck in describing intimate family matters affecting Steinberg's relations with his parents and grandparents, his wife

and children. His absorption in his rabbinical duties and in his writing was a complicating factor in the time and attention that he could give to his wife and sons. He had other shortcomings. Until it was too late, he underestimated the importance of his own health and the danger of overwork and tension. He allowed himself to become involved in more writing and lecturing and organizational activity (YMHA, Zionism, Military Chaplaincy, etc.) than was feasible. He was impractical in permitting a fairly wealthy congregation to pay him a comparatively small salary. He gave inadequate consideration to administration and fund-raising. He was limited in his knowledge of the work of Marx and Freud. He took little part in movements and causes such as civil rights and civil liberties, peace, the struggles against poverty, poor education, housing and medical care.

Nevertheless, the composite portrait of this rabbi adds up to a beautiful and moving picture. He was a man of exceptional charisma (the

Hebrew *hayn* best expresses this). His kindly smile, his spiritual grace, his warmth and sympathy — all drew people to him in affection and high regard. He helped many with their personal problems through visits, letters, phone calls. But, most of all, he thrilled and enriched his friends, his congregants and his readers by his logical and organizing mind and by his use of literature and philosophy, both ancient and modern. His sermons, lectures, prayers and books were characterized by imagination and verve. He was, indeed, a master of felicitous English. His intellectual excitement was contagious; no wonder that his lectures drew crowds, his books a wide readership. His *Basic Judaism* brought enlightenment and pleasure to many thousands. It has remained a perennial in the exposition of Judaism for both Jews and non-Jews.

This is an engrossing biography of a rare soul.

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SUMMER 1980